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PICTURES  
OF  
PRIVATE LIFE.

BY  
SARAH STICKNEY.

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"Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things;—in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

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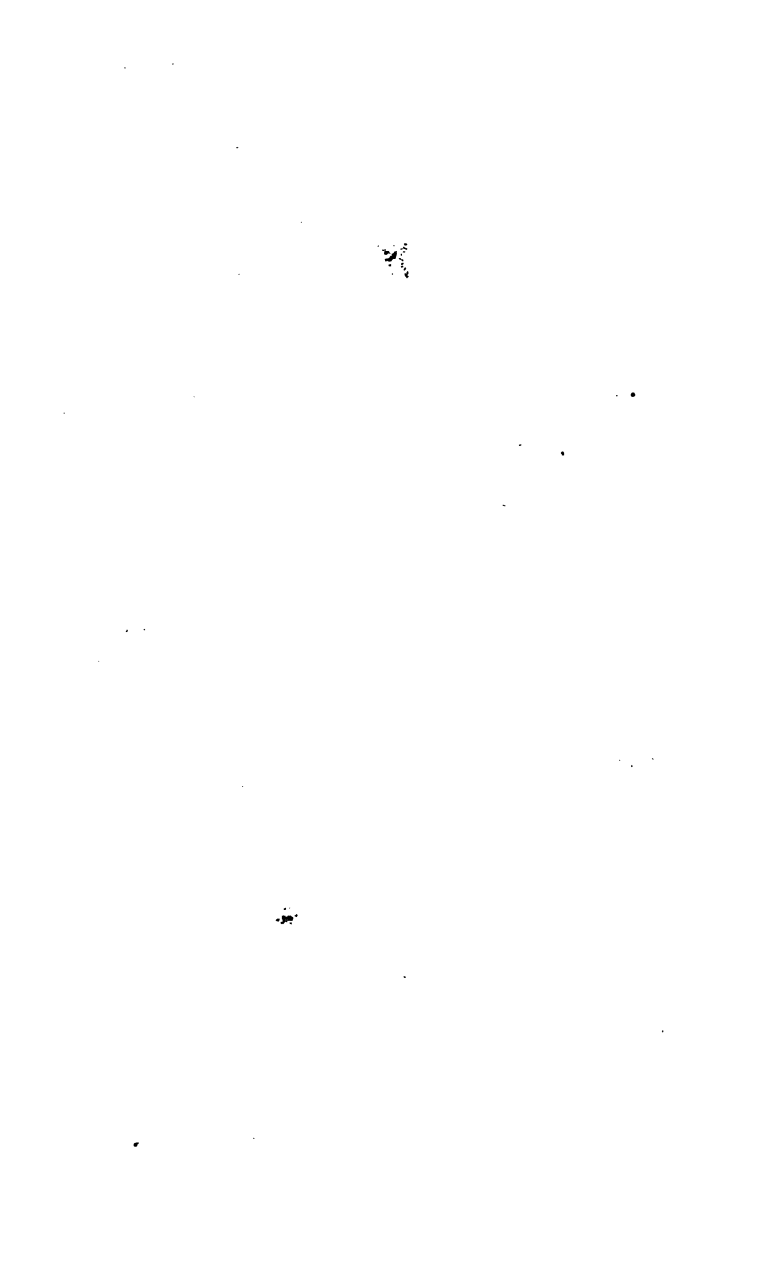
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## AN APOLOGY FOR FICTION.

To write a book which is intended, and calculated, solely for the readers of fiction, and prefix to it an apology addressed to the non-readers of fiction, appears somewhat paradoxical; yet as a member of a religious society, whose sentiments are openly and professedly at variance with works of this description, I would not willingly oppose the peculiarities of many whom I regard with gratitude, esteem, and admiration, without offering in my own vindication some remarks upon the nature of fiction in general.

Fiction may, or may not be, subservient to the purposes of moral instruction. The following are

some of the abuses to which it is most liable :— the delineation of unnatural characters, by the combination of such qualities as never did, and never could exist in one human being ; and the placing such creatures of imagination in scenes and circumstances, where the common sympathies of our nature find no place ; and where the mind of the reader, in order to follow them with interest, must be elevated to the highest pitch of absurdity, and the feelings strained beyond their proper and healthy tone ; and when I add to this, the shameless prostitution of talent, with which some writers have confounded the nature of good and evil, making vice interesting, and virtue insipid, by investing the one with the fantastic drapery of romance, and stripping the other of all that can please the eye or charm the senses, by describing the most astonishing instances of integrity, generosity, and self-denial, as arising solely from an amiable heart, without the assistance of religion, or the control of good principle, I am willing to allow that fiction has often been, and is well calculated to be, a most powerful engine of demoralization.

On the other hand, when a writer keeps steadily in *view* the developement of moral truth, when his cha-

racters are all of our "mixed essence," drawn from the scenes of every-day life, animated with our feelings, weak with our frailties, led into our difficulties, surrounded by our temptations, and altogether involved in a succession of the same causes and effects which influence our lives, his productions may be called fictitious, but they cannot be false. To me they appear at least as lawful as those of the painter, and for this reason I have ventured to call my stories, *Pictures of Private Life*.

Suppose, for instance, an artist wished to exhibit to the public a personification of old age. Perhaps he would paint an old woman in her cottage. But this would not be all. In order to present the idea more complete, he must place before our eyes the interior of her habitation, her ancient furniture, the old fashioned chair on which she is resting, her crutch at her side, her knitting, or her spinning wheel, her kettle and her cat. Now, though such an old woman, with her furniture, such a chair, spinning wheel, crutch, kettle, and cat, never did exist, yet the picture may be true; because the idea of old age could not well be conveyed without the representation of the scene being thus filled up; and in proportion as the

subject is more complex, the collateral circumstances will be more studied, and frequently more numerous.

In the same way the fictitious writer labours, and for the same end ; with this advantage, that the supposed lapse of time, affords him an opportunity of tracing causes to their effects. If, for instance, his subject be virtue, that virtue must be tried ; and therefore he brings in a variety of circumstances all subservient to one purpose. Virtue must be contrasted with vice ; and therefore other characters are introduced, and made to speak, and act, in a manner the most opposed to the words and actions of virtue. Virtue when allied to clay, must not be complete, and without flaw, because that would be unnatural, and convey an idea of a superhuman being ; virtue must therefore sometimes fall away from its high purpose, in order that it may learn humility, and look more earnestly for the guiding hand of Providence ; and, lastly, virtue must have its reward. In this manner the writer is involved in a great variety of imagery, and may sometimes have the management of characters, which, if separately and independently considered, would not be worth his while to delineate.

Various means may be employed to produce the



same end. As individuals we must all labour according to our calling. Some preach virtue, some only practise it, some make a picture of it, and some a poem, and some, (perhaps the lowest in the scale of moral teachers) adorn it with the garb of fiction, that it may ensure a welcome, where it would not otherwise obtain an entrance.

To meet with an attentive and willing listener, is no less difficult than to find an able teacher. Fiction may be compared to a key, which opens many minds that would be closed against a sermon. Nor is it without authority in the writings of sincere and zealous christians. The wide range of allegory affords innumerable subjects for instruction and delight, and many a weary wanderer through the valley of the shadow of death, has been cheered by the remembrance of Bunyan's pilgrim. But the scriptures themselves afford the highest evidence that this style of writing may be made serviceable, as a means of reproof and conviction. Let us confine our attention to one example. Where can we find anything comparable to the affecting story of the ewe lamb? Had the prophet Nathan addressed the king of Israel at once *as a violator of the laws of virtue, honour, and*

generosity, he would probably have found him so effectually defended by the pride of human nature, as well as by the dignity of his office, that he would have failed to reach his heart ; but by the simple story of the ewe lamb, he touched at once upon that chord of feeling, which seemed ever ready to vibrate with sweetest melody, in the soul of the Royal Psalmist ; and then followed that emphatic application “ thou art the man !”

It is in this manner, by the contemplation of ideal characters that we are sometimes led on towards conviction ; our feelings become softened in sympathy with theirs, we unconsciously pronounce our own condemnation, and conscience makes the application.

Although willing to allow that fictitious writing is the most humble means of moral instruction, I am still earnest in endeavouring to maintain its utility, especially on the ground that it finds its way to the dense multitude who close their eyes upon the introduction of purer light.

Happy, happy is it for those whose hearts are open to receive “ Christ as their Schoolmaster,” who have learned to desire the “ sincere milk of the word.”  
*In their select and privileged communities, the bible*

spreads before them a wide field of never ending wonder and delight, and religion is a hallowed word, uniting all their sympathies into one bond of peace and love.

Let us look into the next stage of advancement towards moral excellence, and here we see religion obscured by the mists of party prejudice, still worshipped, but frequently disguised, and misunderstood. A little lower, and religion holds a disputed sway, contending with the spirit of the world, for a small portion of the heart. Lower still, and her power and her excellence are called in question; but before we arrive at that class by which her image is dethroned, and her institutions violated, let us regard that immense mass of beings whose perceptions are so imperfect, whose minds so unenlightened, and whose feelings so absorbed by the trifling affairs of a busy world, that they can hardly be said to have learned to think. It is from amongst these that I have ventured to lift up my voice; it is for these that I have thought, and felt, and written. In vain might instruction be laid before them in a weightier form. Their pursuit is pleasure, their food excitement. And since books of fiction are a kind which thousands



## THE HALL AND THE COTTAGE.

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### CHAPTER I.

“ MY mother was a lady,” said Anna Clare, a beautiful girl of eighteen, to her meek and quiet looking friend, Mary Newton, who sat at the door of her father’s cottage, busily employed in preparing her little brothers and sisters for the coming sabbath. “ My mother was a lady, and though she had the misfortune to marry into a lower sphere, she never forgot her own superiority.”

“ Perhaps it would have been better for her if she had,” replied Mary.

“ So far from forgetting it,” continued her friend, “ she strove continually to impress upon my mind, the importance of imbibing, and retaining, her own notions of that distinction of birth and education which she valued so highly ; and, above all things, warned me against forming any low connection in marriage.”

“ But did she make you understand exactly whereabouts in society to place yourself ? for that must be clearly made out, before you can know whether

you look above or below you ; and in my opinion it is one of the worst evils arising from alliances such as your mother's, and one which those who enter into them must have bitterly to lament, that their offspring occupy a doubtful and unsettled station ; for if possessed of any ambition, they will be perpetually struggling to establish their claim to the rank of one parent, and looking down with contempt upon the other ; and here Anna, allow me to speak a little of my mind respecting yourself, for I have often thought it would be better for you, if you would recollect that you are not entirely your mother's child, but that you bear the name, and live under the protection of a plain and homely man, who has always been to you a kind and indulgent father. But I fear my advice is not agreeable to you."

"Excuse me," replied Anna, endeavouring to look polite, because she really felt angry ; "excuse me, Mary, if I say it is not quite agreeable ; not because I cannot bear to hear the truth, but because you have not the kind of tact which is requisite, to render advice pleasing."

"And excuse me, Anna, if I say, that I do not believe any tact can render advice pleasing to those who do not mean to follow it."

After this, there was a long pause between the two friends, during which, Anna tried to forget what had passed, while Mary struggled to subdue *her personal feelings*, so that she might speak calmly

and seriously, what she was determined her friend should hear.

“ Anna,” said she, “ we have been long friends — friends in infancy — friends at school. Shall we not continue friends, now that we are about to enter upon the cares of women, and may need each other’s help ? But mind me, Anna, friend is a serious word, and ought not to be lightly used. By being friends, I do not mean that we are merely to walk out together, and read together, and hear each other’s love stories. No, I mean that we are to stand by each other through life, through evil report, and good report — to watch over each other for good, and to speak boldly and openly, yet kindly and tenderly, all that we think of each other. This is my notion of a friend ; and if you think I am so meek and low, that I dare not be all this to you, you are very much mistaken, for I never will be humble friend to any one, no, not to you, Anna, dearly as I love you.”

Anna, who had advanced nearer to Mary while she was speaking, now, with tears in her eyes, besought her forgiveness ; and they parted for that night, with more true love than they had felt for months before.

Mary went in with the stockings she had darned, and commenced the operation of washing her little brothers and sisters before they went to bed, while Anna sauntered home by moonlight, musing as she went ; then trimmed a new bonnet for exhibition the

next day, and tried a new tune on her guitar before she retired to bed, where her dreams were scarcely more visionary than those which usually occupied her waking hours.

Neither of these young persons was of the class properly called poor. Their fathers were both small farmers, a description of people once numerous in Great Britain, now very much decreased by the loss of those who have fallen into abject want, and those who are scrambling up the dangerous ladder of luxurious extravagance.

The house in which Mary lived ought not, in the present day, to be called a cottage, because it could neither be etched, nor sketched into anything, that would not be altogether disgraceful to the pages of a lady's album. It was a small, square-looking house, built of red brick, with a green door at the termination of a straight gravel walk, to which you passed through a little gate, green also, and flanked on either side by green paling. On entering the door, you saw on the right hand a common sitting room, with a brick floor, and on the other, a neatly garnished parlour, used only on Sundays, with a carpet and a sofa, and a chimney piece ornamented with a pair of beautiful hand-screens, "wrought by no other hand, I ween," than that of Anna Clare.

If the habitation of the Newtons was incapable of being metamorphosed into a picture, Mary herself was equally incapable of being transformed into a *heroine*. Neither her size, her figure, nor her



face, was calculated to distinguish her from the many.

Her dress was neither picturesque, nor fashionable, and her hair, neither raven, nor flaxen, golden, nor auburn, but just such as no poet or painter could make any use of, was braided over a forehead, neither high, nor marble pale. In short she was just the sort of person of which we fancy the multitude is composed, when we look out upon a crowd of people. While Anna's was a face, which the eye would discover and single out from amongst a thousand, and set the imagination to work to ponder upon whence it could have come, and whither it might be going. From her mother she had learned to place an undue value upon the symbols of wealth; but it seemed as though she had inherited, by nature, all that could adorn and give outward excellence to the highest station. Slender, delicate, and graceful in her figure, she had exactly the kind of taste, which enabled her to set that figure off to advantage; while her raven hair, because she knew not how to dress it fashionably, was always dressed becomingly. Her complexion was clear and glowing, and her dark eyes had that peculiar light of joy, and innocence, which is seldom seen in those that have looked long upon the world.

These simple charms, however trifling in description, may yet be accounted dangerous gifts; and such they have often proved to the poor inhabitant of the cottage. But there is a gift of far more fatal consequence to the peace of woman's mind,

when that mind has not been disciplined by a rational education. "A quest for hidden knowledge," with a deep sense of the sublime and beautiful, which those who have never looked on nature's face with the eye of a poet, or a painter, can in no way comprehend. And this was Anna's portion too. How mournfully misplaced! For, beneath her father's humble roof, where she ought to have been, and, no doubt, under other circumstances, would have been, a kind and dutiful daughter, she was now dreaming away her existence in a world of visions, of which the everyday duties of common life formed no part.

Anna had early imbibed a taste for the accomplishments which adorn the higher stations in society. Music and drawing had been taught her by her mother; and being naturally of an aspiring mind, she had prevailed upon her father to allow her the advantage of instruction in oil-painting, in the hope of rendering her genius more profitable. This was an important step in the *ladder* of distinction, in consequence of which all the well disposed young women in the neighbourhood agreed to call her a genius, while all the young men toasted her as a beauty; the women wishing internally that she had less of the one quality, the men that she had less of the other. But Anna valued both. Her beauty was delightful to her as a painter, no less than as a woman; and her genius was the magical key, which opened to her mental vision the wide field of taste, and sentiment, and feeling; a field so dangerous to

enter upon, that those who have ventured within its charmed precincts, have too often returned to the beaten tract of life with weary, and unwilling steps, wishing in vain to call back the happy thoughts of simplicity and youth, which made the paternal home a haven of rest, and life itself an enjoyment.

Anna's new bonnet had not been trimmed in vain ; for on the following morning, while the sun shone upon a cloudless sabbath in July, the inhabitants of the little village of L——, were astonished by a blaze of beauty, and fashion, at their parish church.

Mary had no time to make observations on the new comers, for with her constant and fruitless attempts to restrain the wonder and admiration of her little flock, and her earnest and zealous endeavours to keep her own attention fixed upon the service, she found enough to do ; but Anna, not being quite so fully engaged, had leisure to set down in her memory the whole family of the Langleys, just come to spend the summer months at their country seat.

First, the old gentleman, Sir Thomas, with his white hair and sleek countenance, and his one idea perpetually recurring to the moor game, about to be shot by his hopeful son.—Lady Langley, with her towering crest of plumes and ribbons ; come down into the country to be great.—Miss Langley, looking soft, delicate, and languid, but alas ! not very young ; come down into the country to brace up a feeble constitution for the ensuing winter, and to lay up a store of good works, to be held in memorial in her

favour, by establishing Sunday schools, and soup societies.—Miss Julia Langley, a beauty of five winters, returning from an unsuccessful campaign; come down into the country to sketch waterfalls, and babble of Corinne.—And the heir apparent, young and handsome, for what earthly purpose could he be come?

Anna had time for all these reflections and enquiries, and a thousand more, by no means omitting the conclusion that Frederick Langley was the most brilliant and moving spectacle she had ever before witnessed in the form of man.

One look, and only one, she had ventured to fix full upon his countenance, when immediately his glass was raised, and Anna felt, that for a long time she was the object of his fixed and steady attention; but for all that, she did not completely turn away, nor take any effectual measures to relieve herself from the embarrassment of her situation, though anger and shame heightened the crimson that spread itself all over her beautiful face.

Before the service was over, Mary had forgotten that any strangers were at church, and Anna had forgotten every thing beside. Mary returned home with serious thoughts, to perform the duties in her domestic circle; and Anna went that afternoon with less than her wonted alacrity, to take her part as teacher in a Sunday school, some years ago established by the good clergyman of the parish, and so steadily supported, as to need little patronage from *Miss Langley*.

Miss Langley, however, could not withhold the blessing of her countenance. Miss Julia could find no better amusement for the Sunday afternoon ; and Frederick thought there might be a chance of his meeting again with the fair vision of the morning.

The door of the school-room opened—Anna looked up, and from that moment, she thought as little of the alphabet, the catechism, and even of the bible itself, as any of her little pupils.

“ Come here to me,” said Miss Langley in a tone of authority, to one of the older girls, who was just taxing her attention to answer in her turn, the question of the teacher. “ Come here to me, and tell me, if you can, what took place at the building of the Tower of Babel ? ”

“ Confusion of tongues,” thought the teacher, “ and I wish it may not be come to us.”

“ What a charming study ! ” exclaimed Julia, singling out a little curly-pated urchin, who laughed, and blushed, and wondered what she meant,

“ Take that, you little —— ” said Frederick, throwing a sixpence on the floor, “ and buy yourself a stick, instead of breaking mine.” Then, turning to Anna, “ A charming amusement,” continued he, seating himself upon the bench beside her, “ I wish I might be a pupil.” But the method he had chosen for commencing an acquaintance was not suited to the taste of his companion. It savoured too much of the Hall and the Cottage. To be singled out as a village beauty, and addressed

with the familiarity of townbred insolence, was not the distinction at which she aimed ; and rallying her wandering thoughts, she assumed an air of dignity, and endeavoured to resume her task.

The young gentleman finding he had mistaken the subject of his attentions, and his sisters being equally disappointed in theirs, the party withdrew, leaving the young people in wonder at their gauze and laces, the old at their folly and assurance.

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## CHAPTER II.

“ I TOLD you,” said Frederick Langley to his sister, the next morning, “ I told you we should all be miserably disappointed in coming to this abominable old Hall, for you see we have neither field sports in the day, peasants dancing on the green in the evening, nor ghosts ranging through the corridor at night. How, in the name of ennui, do you mean to exist ?”

“ Heaven only knows how Pa, and Ma, and Susan will exist,” replied Julia ; “ but for my part, I am going out to sketch, when the dew is off the grass ; and then you know, Lord B—— comes down to shoot in August, and your horses come on Saturday, and I am sure you will let me ride Phillis again.”

“ Lord B—— is a great bore,” replied her brother ; “ and it always rains on the moors, and my horses don’t come till Monday, and you shall not ride Phillis, because you always spoil her paces. But come, the dew is off the grass, and I have so much that is amiable in my temper just now, that I can afford to go out with you to sketch, and cut your pencils into the bargain, *provided only, you will go my way.*”

The fact was, the young gentleman had determined, if possible, to see Anna Clare again. Had his first advances been received with the simper of a rustic coquette, it is probable that all interest about her would have ceased then, and there; but the look of wounded pride, and delicate reserve, with which she withdrew from his familiarity, combined with her beauty, to make a more lasting impression on his mind.

"This is the cottage," said he, leading his sister up to the door of William Clare, for he had made out the night before, not only Anna's residence, but much of her character, and the nature of her occupations.

"But where are you leading me?" asked Julia. "I know nothing of these people, what can you possibly be going to do in this sweet cottage?"

"Leave that to me," said her brother, leading her away from the beautiful scene on which she would gladly have staid to gaze; for the cottage of William Clare had long been the envy of the surrounding neighbourhood. Though precisely on the same footing as the Newtons, with regard to property and rank in life, his house and garden had acquired, during the reign of Mrs. Clare, an air of taste and gentility, which his daughter was equally desirous to support. Perhaps the chief difference in the two habitations was, that the windows of one had been made to open out upon a green lawn; while those of the other *terminated at little more than half the length in a*



broad seat, on which Mary used to sit and read to her father, when the children were asleep, and all was quiet within and without. Each had their parlours of high and low degree, but the Clares trod always on a carpet, and Anna had her paintings, her guitar, her album, and her books, placed with studied negligence about the room, so as to give it a totally different character from even the best parlour of the Newtons.

Anna was at this moment practising an air which had lately caught her fancy, and accompanying it with a low and simple voice, which, though altogether untutored in scientific rules, was sufficiently attractive from its natural sweetness, to arrest the attention of the curious intruders; who, having advanced to the open window, stood in delighted astonishment gazing upon the lovely songstress; while Anna, startled by a rustling amongst the leaves around the window, looked up with no less astonishment than she had excited.

Had there even been time to recur to the affront of the preceding day, it would all have been atoned for, by the kind and polite manner in which Frederick apologised for the intrusion.

He said they were strangers in search of the picturesque; who had come to solicit the assistance of Miss Clare, to point out the beauties of the surrounding scenery, hoping that her taste would enable them to select some subject for a sketch, not altogether beyond the compass of moderate powers.

"I am quite a learner," added Julia, "and if you can assist me, I shall be for ever indebted to you."

By this time Anna had ushered them into her little sitting room; and taking up a large portfolio with just confidence enough to show her extreme devotion to the art, spread before them her own beautiful and highly finished drawings, of such simple and rural scenes, as the country around afforded; at the same time apologising for their want of interest, by saying that she had never been far from her native county, or seen any of the great and magnificent features of nature. For a few moments the woman gave place to the artist, and she went on with enthusiasm, "I sometimes think, that if heaven has a blessing in store for me, it must be, that I shall gaze on the blue sky of Italy!" But the eyes of Frederick Langley, fixed upon her earnest countenance, brought back every latent spark of womanly feeling, and not even the rapturous expressions of his sister, as she turned over the drawings, could again wean her from the consciousness that she was a genius, and a beauty, in the act of entertaining high-born and fashionable guests.

"And you paint too," exclaimed Julia, looking up at a picture in which the artist had given to the subject of one of the drawings the vivid colouring of a masterly hand, and a warm imagination.

"That painting is not mine," said Anna; "yet I do paint a little, though I have practised for so short *a time, that I am ashamed to exhibit my productions;*

but if you will pardon my presumption, and do not mind the litter of my room, perhaps I shall be able to amuse you for a few minutes, by allowing you to laugh at my barbarous attempts ;” and saying this, she led the way to a small room lighted from above, where “all appliances and means” which her humble circumstances afforded, were spread around.

Amongst the confusion of unfinished pictures, all denoting industry and talent, was a portrait of herself, which immediately caught the wandering eye of Frederick.

“Oh! that,” said Anna, blushing, “I know not what to say for that, or how to apologize for having spent my time upon so worthless a subject; except that it is always recommended to young artists to practise upon themselves, and in this instance, at least, I may escape the charge of vanity, for in looking at that portrait I always find an antidote.”

“If the picture offends your eye, I will take it home with me,” said Frederick, laying violent hands upon the treasure; and a scene ensued of laughing, blushing, pleading, and palliating, which it is not necessary further to describe; while Julia, who, to say the worst of her, was only idle and superficial, neither envious nor spiteful, looked round with amazement at the perseverance of her new acquaintance, and began to speculate upon the amusement and benefit of cultivating her friendship, for a few weeks, during their stay in the country.

A sketching excursion was soon proposed, and

Anna did the honours of the country with so much vivacity, and good nature, that Frederick and his sister returned home, delighted with their new-made friend.

"They have been with me all the morning," said Anna, as she passed the garden of James Newton on her way home, and saw Mary at the door.

"Who have been with you?"

"Miss Julia Langley and her brother—the sweetest girl you ever saw."

"What — her brother?"

"How provoking you are, Mary, I am sure you understand me."

"Better perhaps, than you understand yourself," thought her friend.

"Well, Anna, I will try to understand, then, that Miss Julia Langley is the sweetest girl I ever saw — and her brother?"

"I am not quite so decided about him," said Anna, with some confusion; "but they are so fond of painting, of music, of poetry, and of every thing that is delightful.

"Then I am sure they must be fond of you," thought Mary, as her eye dwelt upon the countenance of her friend, who leaned over the garden gate with her bonnet thrown back from her naturally sweet face, now more than usually animated. The company, the excitement, and the exercise of the morning, had given to her complexion a more vivid glow; and *while the light breeze played idly with the "tendrils*

of her raven hair," the whole picture presented to the eye of the beholder, a perfect personification of health, and innocence, and joy.

Mary gazed for a moment with delighted admiration, for in her heart there was no taint of selfishness, or envy; but a cloud suddenly gathered upon her brow, for she thought of the dangerous gifts which heaven had bestowed upon this poor motherless creature; and her heart yearned towards her, with the tenderness of a sister, that she might watch over her, and be the means of assisting her to turn all these brilliant endowments to a good account.

"Why do you look so grave," asked Anna, "now when I feel so happy?" for to her the trees were more rich in foliage, the fields more verdant, and the skies more heavenly blue, than she had ever seen them before. But Mary could not well explain herself. It was too soon to warn her of her danger, and to croak over those evils which we do but faintly apprehend, has seldom a good effect upon the young and ardent mind. They parted therefore without any further explanation, and it was many days before they met again.

These days passed away with Mary, leaving nothing behind but the satisfaction of having gone through her usual routine of homely duties; while to Anna they were fraught with circumstances of deep interest — high hopes, and brilliant dreams of coming pleasure: what they left behind she did not stay to inquire, for *hers was not the heart to look back.*

A tour was planned to the Highlands of Scotland; and Julia Langley, always delighted with new faces, and having formed a most romantic and ardent friendship for the beautiful young cottager, insisted that she should accompany them; and not all the indignation of her mother, nor the remonstrances of her sister, could change her purpose.

"You are not going yourselves," said this amiable patroness of genius, "and therefore it can be of no consequence to you."

"But Lord B——, Lady C——, and Miss Manning," said her sister — "they have never been accustomed to associate with low persons; you will make yourself the jest of the whole world by these absurd fancies."

"And disgrace your family," said her mother.

"The party is of my forming," continued the immoveable young lady. "Lord B—— always does as I like: Lady C—— agrees with her brother; and poor Miss Manning has not the spirit to complain; besides, have I not an undoubted right to take an artist in my train, if I think proper?"

And thus, with a great deal of dispute, and many uncharitable remarks upon the unconscious object of this discussion, which might not otherwise have been called forth, the affair was at last decided to Julia's satisfaction; for she was the youngest in the family, and though not very young, could still coax and wheedle, and insist with so much pertinacity, as not *unfrequently* to carry her point against them all.



It cannot be supposed that Anna's strength of mind was proof against this temptation. Pluming herself upon the professions of her amiable young friend, and encouraging the vain hope that her services as an artist would amply remunerate the party for any expence or trouble they might incur on her account, she joyfully fell in with the proposal, and, with a light and bounding heart, ran over the fields to tell Mary Newton the good tidings.

She had gone through the whole plan, and was expatiating upon some of its branches, before the unusual gravity of Mary's countenance arrested her attention, and, with a somewhat altered manner, she observed,

"You are always so serious now, Mary, when I come to tell you any thing."

"And that, I suppose, is the reason why you come so seldom."

"Was I not here last Friday? — no, it was Monday — no, I cannot tell when it was."

"It was the Sunday evening before last."

"Surely not so long ago as that. Well, I have been too much engaged with sketching and other things, to know how the time passes away."

"You have been in a sort of dream, I think, Anna, from which I hope the time has come for you to rouse yourself."

"You mean with regard to the Langleys. It is no dream, Mary, for I love them all; except the old people, and that proud and sanctimonious daughter of theirs."

“Then excepting the young gentleman, which you are bound to do in common delicacy, there remains one of the ancient and honourable name of Langley, whom you love — Miss Julia.”

“Yes, I do love her, and will love her, and will go into Scotland with her too, and return to you, Mary, the happiest creature in existence; my brain and my portfolio filled with images of lakes, and rivers, and mountain scenery.”

“May I, as a friend, ask you one plain question?”

“Yes, a thousand.”

“Will you travel at your own expence?”

Anna’s face was covered with confusion, and she replied with difficulty,

“I cannot say exactly that I shall, but I hope to make some return.”

“Anna, my friend, my own dear friend, you are deceiving yourself. What return can you possibly make to this high family for the honour which they intend to confer upon you? It is the part of an independent mind to refuse, not with insult, but with gratitude, all offers of unnecessary kindness for which there is no probability of making any adequate return; more especially to the great, because the chance of being able to do any service to them is so much smaller. Indeed, there is nothing but the closest, and most intimate friendship, that can justify the giving, and receiving obligations, without any calculation as to the relative *situation of the parties*. Here, and here only, I would



give and receive, without a debtor and creditor account."

Anna said something about Miss Julia's friendship for herself, but Mary interrupted her with warmth —

"And have you, Anna Clare, lived to give the name of friendship to that which springs up between two young persons who have only strolled together for a few sunny hours by the side of woods and waterfalls? No, if you will turn away from the truth, you compel me forcibly, rudely, but I hope not unkindly, to place it before your eyes. Miss Julia Langley is a sweet tempered, flippant, light-hearted creature, at least so she appears to us; who is interested by your talents, and charmed by your beauty, but more especially delighted with your willingness to oblige and serve her; yet, in her wide world of fashion and of folly, you can act but a very trifling part, and will consequently be very lightly esteemed. For what have you to boast of, that she cannot find and possess, in far greater perfection, elsewhere, except, perhaps, your beauty? and when, I would ask, was beauty a bond of union betwixt two women? Here, in this remote village, you are a wonder, and a genius. Your paintings delight and astonish us; but these people have been abroad, and have seen the works of great masters, and even their own money can procure them such as you would hardly dare to copy. Your music, though exactly such as I delight to listen to, and sweeter, far

sweeter to me than the song of birds, or any thing that I can remember since my poor mother used to sing these children to sleep; what would it be to their ears, when compared even with the meanest performance of an Italian opera girl? Oh, Anna, if you wish to be loved, if you wish to be valued, you will stay with us!"

"I will return to you, dear Mary, and we shall only be absent a few weeks."

"And in those few weeks what may you not endure? you, who have never been accustomed to insult or neglect."

"If I did not expect to be treated in all respects as an equal," said Anna, her indignation rising, "the finest scenery in the world should not tempt me to go beyond my native village."

"Then deceive yourself no longer; for this never can be, it is not in the nature of things that it should be. I have not spoken to you much of late, but I have watched you with the anxiety of a sister, and, though no sister could love you better than I do, trust me, I am not blind to your follies. No, Anna, I have seen the change in your dress and manner. I have seen what you endeavoured to conceal from yourself. It was but last Sunday, after service, that I observed you stop to speak to old Eleanor in the church-yard, while all the time your eye was fixed upon the door at which you thought the Langleys would come out; and when you found *they had gone the other way*, you listened no more,

and thought no more of old Eleanor or her rheumatism, but skipped over the stile, and flew round by the lane, where you were sure to see them ; but finding yourself too far in advance, you stooped down to tie your sandal, though I am sure it did not need it ; and then Lady Langley swept past you with such a look of scorn, as I would not have brought upon myself for the richest jewel in her possession.

“ And now, Anna, may I ask you to believe, that the pain I have given by my plain speaking, has not been from envy, or for sport ; but merely, that you might see your conduct in its true light ; for these things are beneath you, and I know you despise them as much as I do ; but the notice of these people has turned your head. Let me entreat you to feel above them, as you really are : above them in all that is really excellent, though far below them in all which they esteem so.”

When Mary had finished speaking, her friend remained silent for a long time, and though they walked together through the fields to the cottage of William Clare, their conversation was on indifferent topics, for Mary wisely judged it would be safest to leave Anna to the influence of her own reflections.

that has laid up no more substantial treasure for its hour of need.

Surely there is nothing upon earth that demands our pity more than this. Not the foolish bird fluttering in the snares of the fowler; nor the flower that has burst into blushing beauty, on a morning of storms; nor the child that has stolen to the brink of the precipice to play, can be more melancholy objects of consideration, than an amiable and lovely woman, who is drawing from the fountains of vanity and love, her only sources of happiness and hope. And yet, who speaks of her danger? Those who stand aloof in unassailed security, and have never known the insatiable thirst of pampered vanity, nor fallen into the snare of earthly love. Should the deluded creature awake to a sense of her own awful situation, who rushes to the rescue? She looks back upon her sister woman, and the strong arm of malevolence and envy is put forth to urge her to destruction; to accelerate her fall. She leans upon her brother man, and he, more treacherous, but not less cruel, while he covers her with the garment of praise, and pours upon her head the oil of joy, at the same time places on her brow the poisoned chaplet, crying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." Like the priests of old, who with merriment and dance, and song, led forth the unconscious victim wreathed with flowers, to bleed upon the altar of sacrifice.

Lord B—, Lady C—, and Miss Manning, were *amongst those* who rushed into Anna's parlour. They



were of the party for the Highlands ; all things were in readiness, and on Monday morning they were to set out.

When Monday, the eventful day, arrived, Anna took a hasty farewell of the Newtons : and now she stood at the gate leading up to her father's door, and the old man stood beside her, ever and anon, wiping from his eyes tears, that were not altogether shed for sorrow, for he was proud of the distinction which had been shewn his daughter ; but it was a long journey, and the dear child had never been far from the paternal roof before. And Phebe, the old servant, was there too, busily employed in providing every thing for the comfort of her darling ; weeping and wiping her eyes with her apron, without trying to conceal her tears.

Now, though it is a pleasant and easy thing for the writers of romance to make their heroines glide and skim over the earth, without any of the common appendages of matter, it cannot be denied of Anna Clare, (though grievous to relate,) that while standing at her father's gate, she was literally surrounded by those various and vulgar articles, classed under the undignified name of luggage ; that, when the carriage of the wealthy baronet drove up, Phebe was in the very act of drawing from her housewife a piece of white tape to secure the fastening of a green plaid bag, and that when Lord B——'s footman touched his hat, and offered his services to see every thing adjusted, (though at the same time a whisper passed through the menial train, that they had had trouble

enough with their own things, and that now there was no room left,) William Clare described in circumstantial detail, how there was a hair trunk with a wrapper, a bag, a shawl, and a cloth cloak, besides a basket of prog, which Phebe held in her firm grasp, determined to place it herself in the hand of her young mistress, while the cloak, she insisted, must go inside too, for the evenings were cold, and the dear child had nothing on.

Could any thing, to Anna's feelings, exceed the confusion of this moment, during which the serene party sat in smiling wonder at the scene?

Her father, forgetful of every thing but the departure of his child, had slipped on an old slouched hat, that was wont to hang in the remotest corner of the passage; and Phebe! surely she was possessed with the demon of provocation, for she kept the little basket until she could herself place it upon Anna's lap, and thrust in the old grey cloak, spreading it over the costly silk dress of Lady C——, which had never been brought into contact with so rude a material before.

In fact, that moment was fraught with a combination of annoyances, which no words can describe; but which some have felt so forcibly, as to acknowledge that the poor and mean pay dearly in this small coin, for aspiring to participate in the pleasures of the rich and great.

Mary watched them round the brow of the hill, and as soon as they had vanished from her sight, she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

"What are you weeping for?" asked little Martha,

looking up in her sister's face. "You need not be in trouble about Anna Clare, for I never saw her look half so happy in my life."

"I hope she is happy," said Mary.

"Then why do you weep? Will she not come back?"

"She may come back, my love, — but not to me," was Mary's inward response.

Perhaps there are no few words by which we more frequently deceive ourselves than these, "I will come back to you," or, "you will return to me." The birds of spring, the flowers of summer, and the rich tints of autumn, may all come back. The playmates of our infancy, and the friends of our early years, may all return. But will they return unchanged, or shall we be able to meet them with the same glow of feeling unalloyed. Many, who have looked with wonder and delight on the splendour of the setting sun, have turned away with sickness of soul from the glory of his rising beams. Many who have bid adieu to summer, having drank from the well-spring of her loveliness, rich draughts of happiness and love, have met her again, without recognizing her fair form; without one ecstatic bound upon her flowery carpet,—one moment of joyous exultation in the softness of her sunny breeze! And thus it must be, for thus it has been ordained, by a wise and merciful Father, to teach his erring children, that all the treasures by which they are surrounded, are only lent them for a brief space of limited enjoyment, and that here they have no continuing city.

## CHAPTER IV.

LIGHT, and bounding were the hearts, which Miss Julia Langley had gathered round her; herself the centre of the magic circle, if not the source from whence their pleasure flowed, there needed no addition to her enjoyment, except that Lord B—— should declare himself more clearly, and this desideratum, nothing could be more likely to produce, than the present arrangement of affairs.

They had not proceeded many stages, however, before the discovery of certain glances of admiration directed to a part of the carriage where she was not sitting, led her to ask herself, whether it would not have been quite as prudent to leave Anna Clare at home.

Lord B—— thought otherwise, and, judging from her situation in life, that she could not be very fastidious in the choice of an admirer, or the style of his address, annoyed her by the most pointed and familiar attentions; until, repeatedly repulsed by her *coldness*, he determined to punish her by neglect.

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Lady C——, neither young nor enthusiastic, had not travelled many days, before she began to lament bitterly over the inconveniences of the journey; and Miss Manning, deep in the lore of Scotch novels, was disappointed and disgusted, because every old woman was not a Meg Merilies, and every young one a Flora Mac Ivor. Books of poetry and romance were referred to on every occasion, and closed with the natural, but mortifying conclusion, that the Scottish nation must be miserably degenerated.

Anna Clare was the only one of the whole party who was well grounded in the real history of the “land of the mountain and the stream.”

She had been accustomed to read in peace and in private, and had stored up in a naturally good memory such facts, as now rendered her company a valuable acquisition, to those who were not previously disposed to make too high an estimate of her powers of pleasing.

Finding herself of real service to her friends, her confidence began to encrease; and with her confidence, her happiness, her vivacity, and even her beauty too; until Frederick Langley felt himself emboldened to declare, what his heart alone had hitherto borne witness to, — his extreme admiration of Anna Clare. But his was not flattery in the gross. It consisted in that silent course of respectful attention, so irresistible to a delicate mind; shown chiefly by a desire to be informed by her knowledge, decided by her judgment, and directed by her taste; and if

there was more of tenderness in his look and manner towards her than was quite consistent with their relative situations, it was only just so much as to encourage her to ask of him in preference to any one beside, those little services, which constitute the chief bond both of friendship and of love.

How often do we find persons, entering into the most intimate, and the most serious connections in life, not so much from any similarity of mind or sympathy of feeling, as from the manner in which they have been thrown together, have become associated with, and indebted to each other. Is not this, then, another reason amongst the many, why the poor ought to shun rather than seek, all familiar association with the great; and why the great should cease to amuse themselves with those summer friendships with their poorer neighbours, which at best can only serve, on one hand, to while away the monotony of a few months' residence in the country; and on the other leave nothing behind but emptiness and disappointment? This, however, is but the bright side of the picture. Look again, and we see more conspicuously a long list of fatal consequences; amongst which are written in legible characters, the base flattery of the low, and the falsehood of the great; the envy of the poor, and too frequently, their ruined innocence.

Before the expiration of one entire week, the spirits of the tourists had begun to flag; and even Anna felt it difficult at all times to support her vivacity, upon which depended the good will of the party.

Though born to an humble lot, she was not of a robust constitution, nor had ever been accustomed to any kind of hardship. Miss Julia had her woman, and Lady C—— was almost inseparable from hers; but no one attended upon Anna to see that her bed was aired, or to carry her dry shoes.

There are few things we are more ready to profess our determination to do than this,—to “take care of ourselves, when nobody cares for us;” and yet, somehow or other, there are many harder duties which we perform with more pleasure, so much are we accustomed to estimate our own worth by the opinion of others.

Anna had no heart to look after these little comforts and conveniences, and therefore felt the want of them the more; and sometimes her thoughts would return to old Phœbe, and then she wished she had taken leave of her more kindly. But her greatest mortification was to find, that the labours of her pencil, so far from remunerating her friend for her numerous and unlooked-for favours, could never, by any alteration of place or plan, be made agreeable to the whole party. Sometimes they could not possibly wait for her, and the drawing must remain half done; while they wondered that she put away so many unfinished pieces: then they dared to say it was very good, but really they could not recognize the spot; for this very reason, because they had not staid to observe it.

Oh! it is a wearisome, heartless, and life-spending service, to live by the power of pleasing! The miser

has his stated portion doled out to him, and digs in undisturbed security ; and the galley-slave knows, while he toils at the oar, that the utmost stretch of his sinews, is all that his tyrant master can require ; but the miserable child of genius, who feels that he must starve and shiver in the shade, or tax his talents, and sharpen his wit, and torture his sensibility, to purchase the genial smiles of patronage : may not his life be compared to the lingering death of the dolphin, whose dying agonies produce those beautiful varieties of colour, which astonish the delighted beholder ?

Annoyed, perplexed, and disappointed, Anna Clare began to think a little more of Mary Newton than she had done at first ; and but for the kindness of Frederick Langley would really have looked with fearful apprehension to the future.

It happened one day, while left alone to sketch what her gay companions were soon tired of looking at, that they wandered round the foot of the hill, and came again unawares, almost to the very spot where she was seated, and where her figure was screened from them only by a projection of rock, and a few branches of fern.

She had heard their approaching voices without any thought of the subject of their conversation ; when suddenly the sound of her own name struck upon her ear. It was Lord B——, who descanted on her merits in the following manner :

*“ This friend of yours, Miss Julia, is a wonderfully*

knowing person, I suppose she is the village school-mistress ;” and then the ladies laughed immoderately, Miss Julia as well as the rest ; protesting his “ Lordship was so droll ;” after which the mixed sound of their voices, as well as the confusion of Anna’s mind, prevented her hearing what was said for some minutes. She was happy, however, to find that Frederick was not with them, and at last had the additional satisfaction of hearing Julia take up her defence.

“ Well,” said this noble patroness of humble merit, evidently conceding some disputed point, “ that I leave to you ; but I must convince you that she is really a good creature, and so delighted with a little notice, that in common charity one cannot withhold it.”

Anna’s pencil dropped from her fingers, and she had well nigh betrayed herself by a groan of horror. She heard no more, for the party retired laughing and talking on indifferent subjects ; leaving her apparently, as senseless as the stone on which she was seated.

How long her reverie might have lasted is uncertain, had she not been roused by the voice of Frederick Langley, which instantly brought back the colour to her cheeks, though not in time to prevent his discovering that something had occurred to discompose her ; and his suspicions were strongly confirmed by the trembling and agitated manner in which she stooped down to gather up the pencils and loose papers which had fallen at her feet.



“Anna, dear Anna, what has happened to you?” said he.

She raised her eyes — It was the first time she had heard those words of kindness spoken with anything like feeling, since she left her home; and she burst into tears. Nor was it difficult, after this, to draw her into a confession of the cause; but the insult, the contempt, the scorn, she did not at present feel equal to the task of describing.

“I will leave them to-morrow!” was her first exclamation that night, as soon as she found herself alone: when suddenly, a load, heavier, and colder than the chains of the criminal, fell upon her heart—the conviction that she had not the means.

“And therefore, I must eat their bread, and follow and serve them, because I am poor—too poor to resent an insult! Oh! why did I ever come!” And then she thought of Mary Newton, and of her own father,—the plain kind-hearted old man, who looked upon his daughter as a sort of privileged being, who was never to be thwarted in any of her wishes,—the kind-hearted old man, who had furnished her with all the money he could spare, part of which she had laid out in making herself look as much like her friend Julia as possible; part in procuring all things necessary, and many things unnecessary, for her progress in her favourite art; and part, a very small part, had been reserved for farther exigencies.

Of all these things she thought again, and again, *and perhaps*, as often of Frederick Laugley—strange

medley of ideas and feelings ! amongst which, however, she singled out the last, as least painful, upon which to slumber and dream.

Whether it was the superior information and interesting qualities of Anna Clare, which drew upon her the envy of her companions, or whether she did, in reality, overstep the undefinable bounds of propriety which confine the feet of an humble friend, it might neither be wise nor charitable to say ; but somehow or other, her sun went down with Miss Julia, and to the rest it had never risen ; except to Lord B——, who, having acknowledged for a brief space its limited ascendancy, now determined, if possible, to extinguish its fading light.

Anna perceived, yet could not understand, the change ; but Frederick saw, and understood it all.

“ She shall never be made unhappy by your caprices,” said he to his sister, one day after a warm discussion on the subject, while the unconscious object of it was left sketching on the bleak side of a hill, alone, and altogether unregarded by all in the party, except one. But there was one who never wholly deserted her, who would return to the spot where she was seated, with kindness and consideration, to watch the progress of her pencil, to approve, and often to correct : for his eye was as true to the beauties of nature, as his mind was quick to discern, and his heart warm to enjoy them.

Frederick Langley was not merely a man of pleasure ; he possessed noble and generous feelings, the

extent or existence of which he hardly knew ; for he had as yet never felt himself called upon to take any active part in life, or to choose betwixt pleasure and duty.

Along with these good feelings, however, he inherited his mother's pride, and a high sense of family distinction ; and then, with all were blended the taste and the delicacy of a highly cultivated mind, by which its good qualities were developed, and its bad ones concealed ; while a handsome person, and manners unusually gentle and attractive, rendered him as dangerous a companion as could well be found, for the young enthusiast. And then, they were associated together in scenes, where the distinctions of polished life were necessarily forgotten — where man had seldom been, at least, where it was impossible to drag along with him the insignia of his greatness — where nature ruled supreme over her own realm, of lake, and stream, and mountain. Every thing to be admired here, they could admire together ; every thing to be enjoyed, their hearts could rejoice in with unrestrained delight. Together they could climb the brow of the mountain to watch the glories of the rising sun, free alike to the prince and to the peasant. Together they might sail upon the glassy surface of the clear lake, that spreads its silver bosom as kindly to the fisherman's humble prow, as to the light galley, streaming with the pennons of rank and power. Happy mortals ! together they could pour forth their young hearts at the shrine of nature, and



what future circumstance in life would be able to separate them after this ?

Is nature, then, the goddess to whom we are directed to offer all our vows ? Let us stay one moment to consider what nature is.

In speaking of nature, we are too apt to confine our ideas to the origin of all that is estimable in our hearts and affections ; and to look for the principle of evil, to something quite without ourselves, as if the good and evil of our mixed essence, belonged not equally to her realm. Surely the history of man might teach us to mistrust our favourite idol ; for was it not nature that strengthened the arm of the first murderer ? and is it not nature in our own bosoms that responds to the voice of the tempter ?

If, then, nature be the queen of the blue heavens, when they are cloudless, is she not equally so of the storm ? If she slumbers in a bower of roses, does she not awake in deep caverns when earthquakes and volcanoes desolate the land ? If she leads forth the young affections, and gives to generous feeling its ecstatic glow—to love, its syren smile—and to pity, its pearly tear—are not the passions also of her training ?—the fiery passions, that rage and war, and make the heart a wilderness ? Surely, then, there must be a holier compact, a covenant more sacred, than that which is made at the shrine of nature.

## CHAPTER V.

EXCITEMENT is not the natural food of the human mind. It may, for a while, give life to imagination, and quicken sensibility; but, like other stimulants, it is destructive, both to the health of the body, and to the soundness of the mind; and like other stimulants, it leaves behind an aching void.

Anna Clare lived, moved, and had her being, in this deceitful element. Her beauty was the glow of animated feeling, and her genius more resembled the vivid, and uncertain sparkling of electric fluid, than the steady light of a fixed star.

Disturbed with the suspicion now almost amounting to certainty, that the short-lived friendship of Miss Julia was exhausted, she suffered herself to dwell perpetually upon the kindness of her brother, as her only source of consolation; while inwardly harassed and perplexed, by thoughts which it was impossible to communicate, she rushed with redoubled ardour into new enjoyment, in the vain hope of extinguishing every painful recollection of the past, and quieting every apprehension for the future.

This state of feeling was not calculated to last long; and a new evil, hitherto unthought of, began to steal rapidly upon the rest. Days of hurry and fatigue, and nights of sleepless anxiety, had followed each other in such rapid succession, that in spite of all her efforts, first, to be well, and then to appear so, she found her health and strength were rapidly declining. A violent cold, the consequence of keeping on wet clothes, was probably the immediate cause; for now a total loss of appetite, with frequent cold shiverings, and other feverish symptoms, gave alarming intimations of approaching illness. They were travelling through a wild and inhospitable looking country; and ah! how did Anna think of her own home, of all its slighted comforts, but most of all, of Mary Newton. The thought of returning while she had yet the power, was perpetually upon her mind. But then the means!—Once or twice it was upon her lips to ask of Frederick Langley—No! she could ask any thing of him, but money; and money of any one rather than him. And yet, he was the only one of the whole party who had hitherto noticed her indisposition; which soon, however, became sufficiently obvious to all; and a consultation was held one night after she had retired to bed, upon the best manner of proceeding either with or without her.

“We can never exist in this horrid place until she pleases to recover,” said Lord B——, “that’s a dead certainty. Why you might expect better accommo-

dation if you were travelling post to the ——. The hostess looks as if she were planning where to bury us; and that great Highland lass, her daughter, sharpening knives to cut our throats!"

Julia, perplexed beyond measure, at last thought of appealing to medical advice; and a lad half asleep was dragged out of the chimney corner, and mounted on a blind pony, to make what speed he could to the nearest doctor, who lived at the distance of seven miles.

In the mean time, the party amused themselves with such fare as their quarters afforded, and all but Frederick forgot the cause of their anxiety. He was absent and thoughtful; and neither the witticisms of Lord B——, nor the raillery of the ladies, could induce him to assume a gaiety which it was impossible for him to feel, while fully aware of the awful and critical situation of Anna Clare. Not merely awful and critical as regarded her life, but there were other considerations that weighed heavily upon him, now that she seemed likely to be so lightly shaken off by his sister.

The doctor came and pronounced it impossible for Anna to be removed without endangering her life.

"Julia," said Frederick, as he led his sister into another room, "you will not think of leaving this poor creature alone?"

"No, certainly not alone, but what would you advise me to do?"

"If I was my kind hearted sister," said he, lay-

ing his hand upon hers, "I would stay with her myself."

"Who, I?—you know I am the worst nurse in the world. Besides, it may turn out some shocking fever, most probably infectious; and then I might be dead and buried in this horrid country, before any one in England knew."

"I would not leave you, Julia," said her brother, still hoping he might prevail.

"No, no," said she, resigning his hand, it is too much to ask of me; but I will speak to Nevil: perhaps she might be induced to stay, and yet, I hardly know what I shall do without her."

Nevil was spoken to, and resolutely refused, adding, that she must really be compelled to resign her situation, if such a thing were required of her.

"Then what on earth can I do?" exclaimed Julia, returning to her friends, who unanimously protested against remaining another day at such a place; and yet, when the comfort of the poor cottager was the subject of consideration, they looked round and protested it was a vastly comfortable sort of inn for that part of Scotland, and just the thing for those who wanted to be quiet: the landlady, a very decent sort of woman, and the Highland girl the best creature in the world; until, encouraged by these assurances, Julia at length determined upon doing what her better feelings refused to sanction,—leaving this young and helpless creature, alone, and ill, in a

glow of life and hope ; for it was Frederick Langley who stood beside her.

“ I thought you were all gone,” said the poor girl, as soon as the hurry and confusion of her feelings allowed her to speak. “ Why did you not leave me ?”

“ I answer in the words of your favourite poet, ‘ Why, all have left thee :’ and though he has wisely and justly given this simple and touching expression to the lips of woman, yet, trust me, there are men, who can be faithful, and kind, when women are heartless and cruel.”

“ I do trust you,” said Anna, with warmth. “ I was just saying, I had but one friend in the world ; but you have been more to me than a friend.”

“ Say a brother, if you please, Anna, and then we shall be at ease with each other : but let us have a fire, and shut out this cold wind, and make our prison as comfortable as we can. You are not so very ill, I hope and trust, but that we shall be able to meet our party at Edinburgh in the course of a few days.”

He then explained how he had taken his horse early in the morning, and ridden out under pretence of calling upon a college acquaintance, who was then shooting in the Highlands, leaving a message for his sister, that if he found his friend at home, he should probably not join them again before they reached the city, which he hoped they would do by *the end of the following week.*

How vain are all struggles of the most determined will against the encroachments of bodily disease !

Anna Clare would at this time have given worlds, had she possessed them, to shake off the weariness, the languor, and all other symptoms of approaching illness, that were rapidly stealing upon her. For a short time her spirits rallied, for the presence of Frederick was a great stimulus ; but it needed both his support, and that of the nurse, to enable her to regain her little comfortless chamber, where she was doomed to spend many wearisome days of sickness and sorrow, varied only by intervals of stupor and delirium,—days that were counted by Frederick with the anxiety, if not exactly with the affection, of a brother.

The fever at length abated ; and Anna, feeble as a child, once more looked out upon the hills, and the purple heath, now bright in the sunshine of a cloudless autumn day.

The time was fast approaching for Julia and her party to be at Edinburgh on their way home. The time was fast approaching, and yet Anna was so weak, it would have been madness to attempt the journey. No expense or trouble would have been spared by Frederick which might enable him to attain his object, and place his poor friend again under the protection of his sister, before they reached home ; for, pleasant as it might be to linger amongst the hills, with this beautiful young creature, he felt that, upon this crisis, depended her good name with his family at least, if not with her own. Could they



join their party in time, she might be helped forward by easy stages, and her own appearance would sufficiently justify the story of her illness ; but if she remained alone with him, what story could he make sufficiently plausible to satisfy the enquiries of the uncharitable, and the scruples of the envious ?

At this juncture, a letter arrived from Julia. Frederick was alone, and eagerly tore open the seal. It had been detained upon the road, and now told the sad tidings, that the fair writer and her friends would leave Edinburgh on that very day, having waited for Frederick as long as their patience would allow.

“ It is all over,” said he, throwing the open letter upon the table. It is all over, and we must make the best of it.”

It was past midnight when he awoke from his reverie. He was sitting with his feet upon the bars of a little grate that contained the expiring embers of a turf fire. “ No, no,” said he, starting from his seat, and snatching up the candle, now burnt down into the socket. “ Her protector I must be, but no more ; and for this reason I will see her as little as possible.” So saying, he retired to rest, with that solid satisfaction of heart, which the applause of the world cannot give, nor the venom of its envious tongue destroy.

His time was now spent chiefly in shooting, and Anna being unable to amuse herself with her usual pursuits, felt hers hang heavily upon her hands.



## CHAPTER VI.

It was on one of these long and lonely days, that a letter was brought to the invalid, sealed with the crest of the Langleys, and directed by a female hand. Her own trembled as she opened it, and read as follows.

“Miss Clare will probably be surprised that I should have taken the trouble to address a person in her situation ; but regard to myself, and my family, will no longer permit me to be silent. From my sister and her friends I have learned all the particulars of your strange conduct ; and can only wonder that we have not been more sensible of the deep and wicked artifice by which you endeavoured to seduce the affections of our beloved brother ;— too prone, alas ! to fall into the snares of Satan. With regard to the future, my object in writing, is to request, or rather to insist, that you will never make any other claim upon our family, of any kind whatsoever, resting assured, that such claims would be rejected with contempt, *if not* punished by the law.

“Wishing you may experience a sincere and heartfelt repentance for all your transgressions, I venture to subscribe myself,

“Your Christian Friend,

“SUSAN LANGLEY.

“P. S. My sister does not know of my writing. She is extremely sorry on your account, and can with difficulty be persuaded that you have been so very artful and depraved. Lord B—— alone has had the good sense to discover, and the sincerity to speak the truth.

“You will do well to burn this, and say nothing to my infatuated brother.”

Poor Anna! she read the letter again, and again, turning it backwards and forwards, and looking alternately at the direction, and the contents, to assure herself of the reality. Her senses had been stupified by long illness; and it seemed almost impossible for her to comprehend the whole truth. No tears came to her relief. A single kind word would have brought them in torrents. One exclamation at last burst from her lips. “Oh! Mary, you warned me of insult and neglect, but you never warned me of any thing half so horrible as this!”

When Frederick Langley returned that night; the invalid was still sitting in the little parlour, her cheeks flushed with burning crimson, and her eye *bright and wandering*. Shocked by the wildness of

her looks, and her unconnected and hurried answers to his simple questions, he asked the nurse if any thing particular had occurred during his absence ; and she told him that a letter had arrived about noon, and that since then she had not been able to persuade the young lady to take the least thing, nor even to move from her chair.

Frederick returned, and seating himself beside Anna, took her feverish and burning hand, while, in a firm and determined manner, he began to question her about what had passed.

“Circumstances,” said he, “over which we have no controul, have placed us in a strange and difficult situation. To be your protector has become my duty, as it would at any time have been my pleasure ; but in order that I may serve you entirely, it is necessary, that with me you should have no reserve. I therefore call upon you as a friend, and one who is entitled to make such a demand, to tell me what has distressed you.”

Anna made no reply ; but the quivering of her pale lips gave sufficient evidence of her internal struggle. At last she drew forth the letter, and opening it with trembling fingers, placed it in Frederick's hand. Rage and indignation gathered on his brow, while his eye glanced rapidly over its contents. His mind had been prepared for such an attack, and he had no need to read it twice ; but, tearing the letter into a thousand pieces, he thrust them through the *bars of the grate*, and spoke not till every atom was

consumed. "There," said he, "is an end to this specimen of my sister's hypocrisy and malice, and I wish we could say the same of all the mischief it has done. But do not mind it, my good girl; you have done nothing that is wrong in the sight of heaven. Your heart is as pure as the snows of these mountains; and they shall be compelled to acknowledge it."

With the consciousness of her own innocence, Anna tried to comfort herself, and in some measure she was comforted; but how to return, was the question that perplexed them both. It was strange, that in this critical juncture, the principle of evil, ever ready to furnish ways and means, did not suggest to Frederick, that now, when Anna's reputation had received so severe a blow, it would be requiring comparatively but a small sacrifice, to ask her to remain with him, or to consent to seek with him, some more genial climate, where her health and happiness might be restored. To say that he did not think of it, would be much to venture upon any of his sex, in a similar situation; but Frederick Langley was an honourable man, and spurned the idea of taking an unfair advantage, especially of a woman. Besides, he did not yet know the strong impression made upon his own affections; nor how often, after his return to college, the fair image of Anna Clare would present itself; first, animated, brilliant, and gay, as he had seen her at her father's house; then, feeble, helpless, but still *beautiful*, as she now sat before him, writing at inter-

vals, as she could bear the fatigue of writing, to her friend, Mary Newton. And wonder not, gentle reader, that the short, and incoherent letter which follows, should have cost the poor writer the greatest possible fatigue, both of mind and body ; so humbling are the consequences of illness ; — so incomprehensible, the construction of the human frame.

“ DEAR MARY,

“ When I last wrote to you, I was happy. Happy in the contemplation of all that could delight me, — the clear skies, the mountains, and the streams ; and now, if I write of mountains, it will be the mountains of grief that are upon my heart ; if of streams, it will be the streams that flow from my eyes. I have fallen into great trouble since my illness. I am still very weak, and my hand trembles so, that you will not believe this to be my writing ; but indeed Mary, it is the writing of your own friend — your friend, who is now humbled in the dust. Yet do not mistake me, I am guiltless in the sight of heaven ; and only wish I could feel my innocence to be a greater consolation. Frederick Langley has been to me — but I will tell you when we meet, how kind, how delicate, how generous his whole conduct has been : and you, I know, will believe it ; for whatever my faults may have been, I never was guilty of deceiving you. In the mean time, I entreat you to think kindly of me, and to try to make my father and yours think so too ; for indeed, Mary, it was illness, and not inclination, that kept me here.

Pray for me, dear Mary, for I am weak, both in body and mind ; and these cruel Langleys will trample me into the grave."

Before Anna's letter reached its destination, rumour had been busy in her native village. That the tourists had returned without her, and that Frederick too was left behind, became the subject of general remark. Some said they had gone round by Gretna Green ; and some that they had gone off to Italy. All wondered, and many took to themselves credit, for having predicted the consequences ; though still ignorant what these consequences were.

Whether it was the insinuations thrown out against his daughter, which at this time particularly affected William Clare, was difficult to know ; for he was a man of few words : but all remarked that he was altered ; and when Mary spoke of it to her father, he shook his head, and looked grave, and said some mysterious words about his affairs ; which led her to suspect, that all was not going well with his worldly concerns. Indeed, he had never been a money-making man. Quiet, and unpretending in his own habits, he had indulged his daughter in every gratification which his humble means could afford. And now, when that daughter became the " theme of gossips' story," — when the whispers of those who delight to carry evil tidings, told of her folly, and hinted at her disgrace ; it fell with inexpressible *poignancy upon the anxious heart* of the doating pa-

rent. Mary tried to comfort him ; but, though she fully convinced him of the falsehood of the reports, and that his darling child would return to him as innocent as ever, with additional claims upon their love, from her illness and suffering ; still the many-tongued monster would make itself heard, and he could not be comforted.

Those who have never heard a name beloved, coupled with sin and shame, and trembled lest it might be justly too, have never tasted the true bitterness of the cup of misery.

All other draughts may be sweetened ; but this is beyond the power of flattery, for it does not reach the object — of hope, for the blackness of desolation has already fallen upon our Goshen — and of religion, for the more we love God, and delight in the beauty of holiness, the more we linger after the stray sheep, and lament that the gates of paradise should be closed upon the lost one.

Mary went every day to the house of William Clre, to see that he fared comfortably, and that every thing was done to make his solitary evenings pass as pleasantly as circumstances would allow ; for the days were now fast shortening, and the old man came in to his lonely fire, shivering with the sharp winds of autumn.

It was on one of these evenings, when Mary had staid with him later than usual, for they had fallen into a long and earnest conversation about Anna, that a carriage drove up to the door, and Anna herself rush-

ed into her father's arms. But, oh ! how unlike the rosy girl, with whom they had so lately parted. When the first joy of welcome was over, she sunk into a chair, pale, and exhausted, and burst into tears. Mary wept too, and the father ; but his were not tears of sorrow, for now he believed that Anna had come back the same innocent, and guileless creature, she had left them. True, she was sadly altered ; but this was not the alteration he had feared. Yes, she was sadly changed ; but then she had looked up to him again, and again, with her clear bright eyes, in which there was no cloud, nor the least shadow of shame—and his heart was at rest.

Mary could not leave them ; and they sat together that evening, the father, and the daughter, and the friend, united in fresh bonds. The old man spoke seldom. Mary busied herself with those little attentions which tell more of welcome than the kindest words, and that gentle and beautiful young creature looked alternately at her father and her friend, with smiles, that betrayed how her poor heart had been yearning for their love.

To the good management of Frederick Langley, the invalid owed every thing. He had travelled with her in company with the old nurse, until they reached the last stage, and then, leaving them to pursue their journey with the confidence that they could meet with no further difficulty, he proceeded to Cambridge, to recommence his studies, and to forget, if possible, the fair image of Anna Clare.



To the three friends who were re-united (Mary hoped to separate no more), the first days of returning confidence were days of happiness; as the first taste of the cup of duty, is often sweet and pleasant to willing lips. It is the second, and the third, that contain the drops of bitterness. It is the after-trial that proves the spirit; for the heart is deceitful, and after many fair promises, will return to its idols, again and again, like the rebellious children of Israel.

## CHAPTER VII.

MARY could not always be with her friend ; and now the season was fast approaching, when household comforts are most valued, and household troubles most deplored — the dark days, and the cold rains of November. The flowers and the plants, which had grown around the window of Anna's little parlour, weaving themselves into garlands of beauty, were all withered and beaten down. Pools of water stood upon the gravel walks, and when the door was opened the angry tempest rushed in, and Anna and her father were both feeble, and little able to contend with storms of any kind.

This chilly season is the time when the heart draws upon its little store of hoarded treasures ; or it may be, when it broods over its secret griefs. It is the time when happy faces are lighted up at the cheerful fire ; or when the solitary sits musing in tenfold loneliness ; when the rich and the gay delight themselves *with artificial pleasures* ; and when the poor are made *to feel the reality of their poverty*.

While the summer lasts, the bright and bountiful summer, that grudges not to spread her beauties in the path of the lowliest pilgrim, it is not difficult for those who are raised above abject want, to vie with their more opulent neighbours, provided only their residence be in the country ; for there the skies form a canopy more splendid than the hand of the great father of painting itself could produce. In the ever varying tints of the foliage, they have tapestry of the richest and most brilliant hues ; and what loom can furnish a carpet like the green turf beneath their feet ?

But when winter comes, the stern aspect of poverty presents itself in undeniable gloom. Around one fire the whole family must gather in ; young, and old ; boisterous, and quiet ; barbarous, and civilized, must sit down together ; and then if there should happen to be one aspiring spirit amongst the number, which has soared upon the wings of fancy to a higher realm of thought and feeling — alas ! what a fate is hers !

Anna Clare felt all the distinctions of riches and poverty, more powerfully than words can describe ; and though she was spared the misery of contending with coarse and uncongenial minds, she found that one simple duty, of being cheerful, which she owed both to her father and herself, indescribably irksome.

There are those who shut themselves up in retirement, thinking that danger exists only in the pleasures of the world, and safety in their exclusion. But let them look well to the choice they have made, and ask, whether the evils of solitude may not be as of-

fensive in the sight of their Creator as those of society. For themselves, they have an undoubted right, both to know, and to choose, what is best; but there are hearts that can bear witness to the sins of solitude; to the sins, and the sufferings too. Hearts, that have been weighed down with the leaden stupor of melancholy, until every affection was swallowed up in self, every feeling lost in the ocean of misery, from whence no gentle dew is exhaled, as an offering of gratitude to heaven.

This winter would indeed have been a long and heavy season to Anna Clare, had she not been able to resume her favorite amusement; to which she returned with her wonted avidity, as soon as her strength would allow. The sketches she had made in Scotland, became more valuable to her every day, in proportion as she forgot the pain, and dwelt only on the pleasure with which they were connected; and from these, she busied herself to compose a picture, which should exceed all her other performances in excellence of colouring, and execution. To her eye, it was like a vision of paradise; for there was the blue lake on which they had sailed; and, stretching far out into its quiet bosom, was the point of rock, tinged with the rays of the setting sun, where the happy party stood while she was sketching: the broken foreground, the rich purple heath, and the scattered fragments of stone, on which Frederick and herself were seated. Anna painted, improved, and gazed upon this picture, until it became a sort of idol

to her ; but it was not before her father talked of the price she would ask for it, that she was aware of her own idolatry ; and scornfully as her proud spirit at first rejected the old man's sordid notion, after-circumstances occurred, which tended very much to reconcile the idea.

It was evident to many, and now could no longer be concealed from Anna, that her father was failing, both in purse and person. She had no wish to encroach unnecessarily upon his limited means ; but she felt, more painfully than ever, her own inability to assist him ; she felt also the want of many comforts, both for herself and her father, which she had never thought of before ; for she was still extremely delicate, and the winter's cold seemed more than her slender frame could bear.

"If I had but a warm cloak," she said to herself, one day, after a visit to Mary Newton ; and then, the thought of her picture presented itself, to be rejected and returned to a thousand times, before she could really make up her mind to part with it.

The love of a mother to her offspring is known even to the brutes ; and there are many other natural affections, common to all ; but the love of a painter for his picture, is what few can imagine, because few have known it. And if he do sometimes value his performance at what the world considers an unreasonable rate, let it not be set down solely to an inordinate love of gain ; for in his picture, he beholds the clear skies, the work of his own hands, all bright and glow-

ing, as if no cloud had ever cast a shadow on his path; the trees, in their perpetual verdure, and the seas, the lakes, and rivers, that know no storms: but most of all, his eye delights to dwell upon the portrait of a friend; for when he looks on that, memory brings back the time when it was painted—the kind words that were spoken, and the feelings that were shared together. Time may change the original. Alas! we all know, that time can wrinkle the fair cheek, and dim the sparkling eye with tears; and oh! more than all, can estrange the heart, and turn away the current of the affections; but this mute and motionless image bids defiance, alike to the ebb and flow of human passions, and to the chilling touch of time.

After many a lingering look, not unfrequently blended with tears, Anna at last determined upon the sale of her painting; which accordingly was set in an elegant and costly frame, and sent to stand the test of vulgar criticism, in the window of an artist's repository, in the neighbouring town.

The picture, however, was not sold, though the frame was paid for; and Anna was obliged to fold herself, once more, in a cloak that was neither warm nor handsome.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"THERE is nothing puzzles me so much to account for," said Anna to her friend, "as, how you should always be so happy."

"Can you tell me," replied Mary, "why that little robin bears so patiently the winter's cold; and sings so cheerfully when he feels the first gleam of sunshine? It is because he has never flown to warmer climates, but contented himself with such things as God has placed around him."

"But you surely do not mean to say, that in my situation, you could be happy?"

"In your situation, Anna? I would not, willingly, give way to envy of another's portion, or repining at my own; but sometimes, when I am weary, and the children have been troublesome, and I see you sitting so quietly in your elegant parlour, just following your own pursuits, without any one to tease or interrupt you, it does seem to me that yours is a privileged lot. But, mind me, I would not change with you, if I had to take into the bargain all the idle fancies

that possess your brain. Constant exertion, has been a great blessing to me ; but far before this, and next to the immediate protection of Providence, I ought to reckon the instruction and example of a good mother. A mother, who taught me to be content with my humble portion, and to cultivate such habits and desires, as would make that portion happy. So, you see, there is no merit in my being contented, because this, as well as every other good thing I am capable of, was taught me by my mother."

Anna was silent for a long time, and when she resumed the conversation, it was with a slight apology for the freedom of the remark she was about to make ; and then smiling, lest it should appear too serious, she went on.

"There is another thing, Mary, equally incomprehensible to me, and that is, how you can love that homely and quaint young man, Andrew Miller."

Mary coloured deeply, but not with shame ; for her attachment to Andrew Miller had already been acknowledged before her father, and many of her friends ; and so high was her estimation of the worth of his character, that she could not hear without indignation, the least slight, or insult connected with his name.

"I will tell you," said she with some warmth, "if you can listen to so plain a story, why it is that I love that homely and quaint young man. We have known each other from infancy. For a long time we went to the same school. I was dull at learning, and



he was always ready to help me out. I was not, in my early years, so dutiful a daughter as I ought to have been; and he used to tell me kindly, and seriously, what he thought of my conduct. I was often fretful, and ill tempered when he reproved me; and yet he never would forsake me, nor give up the hope that I should live to have a clearer view of my own true interest; and to all these I will now add, if you please, a true woman's reason, — I love Andrew Miller, because he loves me."

"You are a good girl, Mary," said her friend. "I would laugh, if I dared, at your Damon and Delia sort of love; but it ill becomes the miserable to make a jest of the happy. Have you never a Philander for me?"

"You may laugh if you will, Anna, and make a jest of my love, though not of my lover; but there is no greater proof of the error in which you have been educated, than the contempt with which you would reject the pretensions of an admirer in your own sphere of life; and yet, to live in single and stately blessedness upon a very slender income, is a fate for which you are by no means prepared; and to be carried off by a hero of romance, is a privilege not often enjoyed by the damsels of the present day."

Anna knew of but one hero, with whom her own fate could in any way be connected, even in idea; one who was never forgotten, but so seldom named, that the two friends seemed, as if by mutual consent, to have ceased to make him a topic of conversation.

It is true, the young enthusiast had returned with his fascinating qualities deeply engraven on her heart, and his praises ever ready to flow from her lips ; but finding how extremely difficult it was to do him justice, without describing scenes that wore a sort of doubtful character betwixt love and friendship, which might reasonably be misunderstood by her friend, since they were not very clear, even to herself : she ceased, by degrees, to name either him or his merits ; and Mary ceased also, contenting herself with the belief, that no correspondence was kept up between them, and trusting to the well known propensity of young gentlemen to forget young ladies, especially when absent ; besides, they had both other things of deep interest to converse about. The health of William Clare was failing rapidly, and every one predicted that he would not live to see another spring ; and dark sayings were heard about his worldly affairs, and harsh comments were made upon his useless daughter. Anna's health was also extremely delicate, and she would often talk to Mary of the cold Scottish blight, from which, she believed, she never should recover.

Under these clouds the poor artist and her father spent the month of December, and Christmas, the happy time of good cheer and hearty welcome, brought nothing for them but that long train of gloomy realities, with which this merry-making season is associated in the minds and memories of those who have had to drink of the bitter draught of poverty.

No rosy school-boy threw open the door of William Clare; no cheerful party gathered round his hearth; no games nor festivities echoed in his silent home; — but a sickly daughter leaned her head upon her hand, in musing attitude, her eyes fixed upon the glimmering of a scanty fire, which just gave light enough to show the vast accumulation of bills and papers piled up on the mantel-piece. The night was dark, a heavy fall of snow lay thick upon the ground, and a fierce wind howled around their dwelling, searching every crevice of the doors and windows. The old man was dozing in his arm chair, and Anna sat beside him, pale and motionless as a marble statue, when suddenly a loud knock was heard at the door, and they both started, one from sleeping, and the other from waking dreams.

It was a long time before the old servant could unbar the door, and Anna stood trembling and agitated, she knew not why. The foot of a man was heard stamping off the light snow, and she began to think he never would come in.

“Is your mistress at home?” said a kind and well known voice, so unlike all other voices, — so impossible to be mistaken! —

A few evenings after this, the members of a book society, established by Miss Langley, held their meeting at the house of Mr. Blanchard the surgeon, where two maiden ladies, of unspeakable age, amused themselves with the following conversation: —

“Dear Miss Langley, she has so little time for

writing, and yet what a kind letter I have received from her this morning." And the lady spread forth a neatly folded sheet of the finest writing paper, in which a few wavy lines, extending far and wide, told how much the amiable writer was interested in the improvement of the inhabitants of her dear village of L——, and how truly she was, &c. &c.

"There is one thing, however," continued the lady, "in which I confess I am in the dark. Miss Langley recommends the study of Belles Letters, and, between ourselves, I cannot recollect ever having heard of them before. Now you, who have so good a memory, may perhaps be able to help me out, for as I mean to order the book to night, you know it will be quite as well to say something of the style of the publication, its size, price, and so forth.

The lady appealed to drew her hand across her forehead, and then confessed she had read the book; but really, it was very odd, she could not call to mind whether it was an octavo or duodecimo. "Ah! here comes my nephew, charming boy! even he has imbibed this love of literature. How delightful to meet with such young and ardent minds engaged in the same laudable pursuit."

At this instant a rosy-faced, red-handed, blustering young man, dressed in a short coat, and slashing a riding whip about his own legs, and sometimes the legs of his neighbours, walked, or rather waded into the room; and after staring at the young ladies, and *stumbling over the toes* of the old ones, at last turned



to meet the welcome of his aunt, though with no very cordial greeting on his part.

"Which is pretty Miss Clare!" said he, before the lady had concluded her encomiums on his love of literature. "I came to see Miss Clare, and I'll take my oath there isn't a pretty face in the room. Jim Bowles tells me she's grown confounded plain, and hasn't any colour at all.

"Speaking of the Langleys," said the aunt, "what can have brought the young gentleman into the country again at this time of the year?"

"Why, don't you know that his horses are kept at Langley Hall, and that Lord B——'s hounds will throw off on Preston Common on Thursday; and a glorious run we mean to have!" and then the young Nimrod set up his hunting yell in the very ear of her who had just begun to hope that he would at last "get understanding."

As soon as this noisy intruder had withdrawn himself, and the old ladies could again hear themselves talk, they went on, with lowered voices, to hope, but really they could not help fearing, that young Mr. Langley had come down with some particular view. "It was a sad affair, very sad, but such things must be expected from bringing people up so much above their situation."

They had long thought the girl was more like a play-woman than a respectable farmer's daughter. Respectable, indeed, he was not; for it was well known he could not meet his payments this Christ-

mas, and that all would have to be sold up ; and then they wondered how much the moreen window-curtains would go for ; and then, more interesting still, they branched off into the merits of some articles which they had lately purchased for themselves ; comparing the price, and the quality of each, with many other items, not noted in the records of the book-society of L——.

## CHAPTER IX.

THERE are harsh natures that cannot enter into a situation, such as Anna Clare's, who would say that she was bold, imprudent, and sought, what she deserved to find, her own destruction. But surely, they can never have known how plausible is the first appearance of earthly love, to those whose hearts are yet warm with the glow of youth, and unhackneyed in the ways of the world. So pure, so disinterested, so entirely divested of every thing either gross or mean, is the first growth of this dangerous passion, at least, in the breast of woman.

Anna felt all this, without one suspicion of the candour and integrity of her lover ; nor had he hitherto harboured a thought that was injurious to her. In him, she saw only the kind friend and companion of her summer rambles, come back to her, when friends are dearest—in the winter, when there are few external sources of enjoyment ; and oh ! more than all, in the winter of the soul !

To the gaze of vulgar admiration, Anna had indeed

lost much of her beauty, with her bloom; but to Frederick, she was more lovely than before. It is true, she was much paler; her look of rosy health was gone; yet the colour had not so entirely forsaken her cheeks, but that it was ready to come back with every varying emotion, brighter and purer, and more spiritual in its variations.

There were traces of deep thought too upon her clear forehead, but so gently marked, as to seem only as if the finger of sorrow had lightly touched, and then withdrawn itself, unwilling to mar the beauty of so fair a picture. Perhaps, she was graver too; and it was evident from her whole deportment, that experience had been her sage companion—experience, whose counsels are, or ought to be, so salutary; whose rejected lessons are so appalling, when they rise up in judgment against us. When Frederick first beheld her, she was like the creature of a poet's dream; but now, a stranger might assign to her the station of a wife, a mother, or a friend. She was then more beautiful to gaze upon; now, more fitted to be loved; and he had come back with the idea, almost amounting to conviction, that it was impossible to live without her.

“*Respice finem*,” is a motto, that we should all do well to adopt, and never lose sight of through the dangerous pilgrimage of life; but, most of all, it behoves the woman who listens to a tale of love, to “look to the end.”

Anna Clare had no such extended vision, nor ever



asked herself, of what intrinsic value the love of Frederick Langley could be to her ; but listened, as weak and foolish woman will listen, while the only man who had ever fascinated her young imagination, poured forth his soul in high sounding professions of never ending attachment. Mary Newton was now forgotten ; the bleak winter vanished, the snow melted, and all but her aged father, seemed to wear the cheerfulness of spring.

Frederick had said all that the most ardent lover could say ;—he would leave Cambridge in April, and then his travels would commence. She was to go with him to Italy, where her health would be restored, and her skill in painting perfected, under the first masters. Nor was it until some days after his departure, that this thought occurred to her,—he had never mentioned one word about marriage, of the consent of his family, or any of those business-like concerns, which she was willing to believe did not often intrude upon an attachment, pure, and romantic, like theirs ; and therefore, she was satisfied, at least, she told her heart a thousand times that she was so ; but still, whenever she determined upon telling Mary Newton all that had passed, there was something which put a stop to her words, and she never could bring herself to make a complete disclosure, even to this faithful friend.

We know, that when there exists between two intimate friends a resolution not to converse upon one particular subject, which is intensely interesting to

one or both, a separation, or suspension of intimacy, is the natural consequence; and thus it was with them; for Anna felt that she was keeping back what ought to be told, and Mary was a little piqued that so slight a circumstance, as the visit of a young gentleman, should have destroyed their long cherished confidence; nor could any thing less than illness have brought her again to be so frequent a visitor at the house of William Clare, until some confession had been made. But the old man was failing fast, and she could not allow Anna to be left alone with him; and therefore she came often in the day, and sometimes staid through the night, and yet the two friends would frequently sit in silence together, both feeling that they were not to each other what they ought to be.

At length, however, the death of William Clare, put an end to all reserve, for they had more serious things to do, and to think about, without consideration of their relative situations.

James Newton and Andrew Miller were his executors; and when they came to the winding up of his affairs, it was discovered that there would barely be sufficient for the discharge of his debts, without leaving any thing for the maintenance of his daughter.

When Anna was first told of this, she heard it in silence; but she never slept on the following night, and her feverish symptoms returned, with an accumulation of distressing feelings, which terminated in

a severe attack of the same disorder from which she had suffered in Scotland.

Mary was her faithful and unremitting attendant, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her restored ; her mind too, was more at ease, and she could speak calmly of the past, and of the future ; though not of Frederick Langley. About him there was still a mystery, which Mary could not fathom, especially when Anna, in speaking of the future, added a hope, that she should not long be burdensome to her friends.

“ Anna, dear Anna,” said her friend, “ let me never hear that word from you again. I cannot make professions, nor say that you shall come to live with my father and me ; though I am sure you would be welcome to every one of us ; but we live so differently to what you have been accustomed to, that I know you would not be happy. I have, however, not been idle during your illness. I have determined and acted upon a plan, which I hope will make all things easy. I will marry Andrew Miller. I suppose you know that he has taken this farm ; and then you can live with us. We have only been waiting because I thought the girls were too young to take charge of the family at home ; but now, I dare say, they will do very well, with me so near them : and if you do not like to be altogether what is called dependent, they shall come to you every day, and you shall instruct them in those things, which I either did not know myself, or had no time to teach them.”

Anna stretched out one thin and burning hand to

meet that of her friend; while with the other, she strove to conceal the tears that were now fast falling from her eyes; but she could not speak, for thoughts rushed upon her, some too painful, and some too pleasing for utterance.

"I have told Andrew," resumed Mary, with her wonted simplicity; "and he, poor fellow, is pleased enough. I wish you could just tell me that it pleases you, for I cannot see why you should weep so, when Andrew, and I, and my father, and the children, will all be made so happy. Perhaps you will consider of it;" and so saying, she left the room, and Anna, giving full vent to her feelings, sobbed aloud.

"She is too good to me," said the poor girl, a little recovering herself, "they are all too good; it is my rebellious heart, that will not let me be happy. Oh! Frederick Langley, what have I to do with you? what have I to do with any thing but sickness, and poverty?—why cannot I sit down contentedly, to be what they called me, the 'village schoolmistress!'"



## CHAPTER X.

THE next circumstance of any importance, which took place at the village of L——, was the marriage of Mary Newton and Andrew Miller. A large concourse of friends and relatives assembled, and Anna put off her mourning, and figured for that day as a bridesmaid. The tables of James Newton groaned with plenty; good fare, and hearty welcomes, were bountifully dispensed; the children laughed and played tricks with every body, and old people hobbled in to give the happy pair their blessing. There was not a repining spirit in the whole party, and even Anna looked pleased, and strove to smile at the coarse jests of her neighbours; for, blush not, gentle reader, such things will prevail in times of festivity, even amongst those who were formerly shepherds, and shepherdesses; Damons, and Pastorellas.

Andrew Miller was a man of strong, useful understanding; cultivated, at least informed, but not refined; perhaps, in his share of knowledge, as much above his wife, as she was superior to him in the delicacy and sensibility which belong to her sex.

Though constant in the performance of every duty, whether religious, or social; by no means forgetting such as belong to charity, and good neighbourhood; he scarcely knew how to extend his pity to those who suffer from imaginary evils, and strew thorns in their own path. Thus, his gentle helpmate was often obliged to screen her friend from his censure, and even in spite of her good management, he would sometimes, without the least idea of causing pain, give utterance to plain truths, which wounded Anna's pride, and Mary's feeling. There were besides, little points of vulgarity about him, continually striking upon the delicate nerves of the fair heroine; and one single weakness, by no means confined to Andrew Miller, was a constant source of irritation and annoyance,—he was extremely fond of hearing himself read, though by no means a good reader, at least, in Anna's estimation; for she thought of Frederick Langley, and the fine tones of his well-modulated voice, when he read to her in that little village in the Highlands, and the moments flew so rapidly along.

Perhaps there are few things in which the cultivation, or refinement of the intellectual powers is more perceptible, than in the style of a person's reading; for how well soever these untaught readers may understand the meaning of the author, it seems impossible to give his words the proper tone and emphasis, without a regular parrot-like training; and when they read from a book, precisely the same expressions which they make use of every day, they

seem bound to torture their words into a totally different sound, merely because they are in print. The books too, which Andrew Miller made choice of, were more ancient than the grandmother from whose library they had descended ; and then he would give long histories of that grandmother, who had been a great personage in her day, and figured as mayoress in the town of —— ; of the aldermen, and what property the different branches of each family then possessed ; with accounts of houses that were pulled down, chapels that were built, levels that were drained, navigations that were made, and commons that were enclosed, in his father's time. And yet Andrew Miller was a good man, and ought not to have been despised ; for the number of good men is not so great as to make them worthless. Yes, he was indeed a good man, for he endeavoured to keep the service of his Maker continually before his eyes ; to make it the rule of his actions during the day, and the subject of his prayers at night. A strict supporter of the established religion of the land ; he served his king with integrity and uprightness, and his God with fidelity and zeal.

If he made an idol of any thing, it was his wife ; and well he might, for she was a good and kind one ; and he was proud and happy in the possession of such a treasure. But her sickly, pining friend, he could not understand ; nor why she was not as cheerful as himself and Mary : so he fixed upon the absence of religion as the cause, and perhaps he was

not so far wrong, as in the means he adopted to remedy the evil, for he read the Bible to her till she was weary of hearing it; and good books in such numbers, that she forgot both their nature and their names: and all the while her wandering spirit would fly to happier climes, and clearer skies, leaving the dull realities of life behind.

The first coming of spring is peculiarly delightful to those whose minds are at peace; who feel the importance and the pleasure of entering upon another year of duty and enjoyment; and can look up to their Creator with thankfulness, that he has given them a taste to enjoy the one, and a reasonable hope of being able to perform the other.

The first pale snow drop that burst from its icy prison, Mary gathered, and presented to her friend; and the first motherless lamb that Andrew brought in, she would have given her too, thinking it might amuse and interest her; but Anna's heart was far away from the simple pleasures of the cottage, and she cared for none of these things.

When the first song of the lark was heard one bright sabbath morning, as they walked to church, Mary looked up to the skies, and inwardly blessed the God of nature, who had placed her in a world so beautiful and happy; while Anna bent her eyes upon the earth, and wished that little bird was singing over her grave; and yet, she had the firmest reliance upon the truth and fidelity of her lover; but for all that she was not happy. She believed, too,



that he would come again, and find her, even in her obscurity; and yet she was not happy. All around her was contentment and peace; and yet she was not happy.

Ah! that we would always compel ourselves to institute a strict, impartial, and thorough investigation, into the causes of our unhappiness. That we would make an enquiry which admits of no tampering, why we are not, as the merciful Author of our being designed we should be, numbering our blessings, and counting the favours which his gracious hand bestows upon us? Would not such an enquiry generally produce the conviction, that we are not giving up the whole heart to him, who has an undoubted right to rule over it? That we are making no better than a conditional covenant, that, if he will grant us some particular request, we will then serve him; or, turning to idols of perishable clay, which in a single moment may be broken into fragments at our feet.

“What am I, O Lord, that thou shouldst thus be mindful of me? O! make me more worthy to partake of thy mercies!” was the simple and earnest prayer of Mary, every night before she retired to rest; while Anna became a stranger to the duty of prayer altogether.

For the present she knew of no blessings, at least she felt none, for which to be thankful; and for the future, she had but one overpowering wish, and if that should be denied, she believed it so utterly im-

possible to be resigned, that she never even supplicated help from that Being to whom all things are possible; and thus being unable to say, with full sincerity of heart, "Even as thou willest, O my father," she forsook that Father in the morning of her days, and went on her way repining.

April came at last, to Anna's anxious wishes; and with it a letter announcing the intended return of Frederick Langley. He was to take up his residence at the Hall for a few weeks, until all arrangements were made for his journey—for *their* journey; for he never spoke of going abroad, or of the future, without associating Anna with his plans of pleasure; and yet, there was nothing said of marriage, but a hint was delicately dropped, that their meetings must be neither public nor frequent.

The thrill of delight with which Anna first read the letter, was soon turned to sickness of soul, for she could not show it to her friend; and she must carry on a system of deception with that friend to whom she owed so much.

Well may the anguish of a troubled conscience be compared to the gnawing of a worm, which dieth not. To bear about with us continually the consciousness that we are harbouring some sinful purpose, which we dare not reveal, lest the kind hearts that are beating for our happiness should stagnate with horror, or shrink away with disgust;—to fix our weary eyes upon any object, rather than the countenance of a well tried friend, who is watching us with

looks of tenderness and trust ; — to seek, yet dread the darkness when we lie down at night, and to awake in the morning with a trembling sense of exposure, in the bountiful and glorious light of another day. Surely, of all the hard portions which the human heart has perversely selected for itself, there can be nothing to exceed this in poignancy of suffering.

The day arrived, on the evening of which Anna was to meet her lover, and she could not help thinking, that Mary's eye followed her with uncommon scrutiny ; and when she stole out in the twilight hour, she felt like a guilty thief who is about to wrong his trusting master.

Is there any beauty in a beloved countenance that can clear away the darkness of a troubled spirit ? Or is there any music in words of love that can charm away the reproaches of the still small voice ?

Anna felt there was none ; and returned that night to her solitary chamber, with heaviness of heart ; but yet there was a spell upon her, which she could not, would not break, and all night long she wearied herself with dwelling upon and comparing such pictures of the future, as love, romance, and contempt of humble life, combined to present. On one side, there was her poverty, her dependence, her weak health, and inability to struggle with the rough accidents of life ; her loneliness, for she felt alone, with those who could not enter into her heart of hearts ; and the loathing with which she looked round upon

the common herd, with whom she must necessarily associate, with all except Mary, and Mary was — married. On the other side was a bright vision of golden uncertainties, too dazzling to be looked upon with steady eyes. All that the poet dreams of when his soul is most elevated above the gross things of matter, — all that the painter pictures, when his spirit takes the wings of the morning, and soars into its native regions of light ; and, above all, there was that secret voice, for ever pleading with the heart of woman, to lean upon the broken reed of earthly love, to glide upon its glassy surface, to repose in its bower of thorny roses.

## CHAPTER XI.

It was a part of the system by which Frederick Langley quieted his own conscience, and imposed upon Anna's understanding, that he urged her to do nothing contrary to her own inclination. If she would commit herself to his protection, and forsake her country, and her friends, it was to be of her own choosing; he only promised her unchanging fidelity, a speedy rescue from poverty, dependence, obscurity and contempt; and a free and happy life, in a land rich with delightful associations, where her feeble constitution might be invigorated, her taste gratified, and her genius encouraged; and where an attachment pure, and unchanging as theirs, might be indulged without fear of the withering sneer of the censorious moralist, or the anathema of the rigidly righteous.

Anna listened till her senses were bewildered, and a dense mist seemed to obscure her perception of right and wrong.

"It is for souls like yours," continued he, "to

spurn the laws that were only made for baser natures. Your beauty was not given to fade in the damp fogs of England; your heart to pine in the solitude of a country village. Your noble spirit shall bear you to a land where it may roam at will, amongst all that is exquisite in art, and magnificent in nature." And thus the man went on; and the woman listened, like our first parent, to the voice of the tempter; until the one, clear, divine injunction, was forgotten in the contemplation of a picture of ideal happiness, which now took possession of her whole soul. Could this picture, and all the disobedience which its realization involved, have been described to her in the unvarnished language of vulgar truth, she would, most probably, have turned away with horror and disgust, at once declaring herself incapable of an act of such enormity. But it is the peculiar province of that power, which too frequently takes possession of the young and ardent mind, under the character of sentiment, romance, taste, feeling, or whatever fanciful designation its victims choose to bestow upon it, to invest, with a sanctity of its own creating, whatever is brought within its magic circle; subjecting every sentiment to the censorship of the poet; judging of every action by the criterion of "good taste." And thus, many whose talents have fitted them to be a light, and a wonder to the world, having spurned at the precepts of religion, as inventions to frighten fools; and having trampled on the laws of morality, as intended only

to restrain the base and vulgar herd, have themselves passed away from this state of existence, without having fulfilled one rational purpose, or leaving anything behind but a blank or a ruin to tell where they have been. And it is in imitation of these eccentric stars, that minor lights give up their little ray of usefulness, and dance, and glimmer, and expire, like the ignis fatuus of the morass.

“ Who listens once will listen twice,  
Her heart, be sure, is not of ice,”

Has been said by one who well knew the weakness of the human heart ; and in this manner Anna Clare proved that hers was not of adamant. Time flew on, and yet her decision was not made ; the evil day was put off, and surely there could be no sin in thinking of it till that day should really come.

“ Recollect,” said Frederick, one evening when they were about to part, “ that you have yet given me no promise, and that in three days, I shall be gone.”

Anna stood for some time in speechless and motionless silence ; and then said softly but audibly. “ Then in three days I must either go with you, or be left behind.”

Were there no words she could bring in opposition to that fatal journey but this simple expression of total and solitary bereavement ; “ I must be left behind ;” a sound that touches so painfully upon the heart of woman. Anna felt all its force, and exclaiming with



convulsive effort, "Then I will go;" she tore herself from her delighted lover, and hurried over the fields, and through the little gate, opening immediately beside the door, that was once her father's. She entered: it was the time of evening prayer. Andrew, his wife, and servants, were gathered together in the performance of this holy duty; and Anna knelt down beside them. But O! what a contrast to the quiet and peaceful inhabitants of that dwelling. Her hair fell around her in loose tresses, her cheek was flushed, and her eye wild and wandering. She uttered no response to the prayers—she joined not the hymn which that night arose to heaven.

Mary went with her friend to her own apartment, for she thought she must surely be ill, and might want something; so setting down the candle she said she would stay with her until she went to sleep.

"No, no," said Anna, "you are very kind, but I would rather be alone."

"Then I will come again;" and so saying, she left the room, and when she returned, it was with the quiet step of a mother who fears to wake her child. Finding Anna was not asleep, she stooped over her, and said she had just come to see that she was comfortable, and wanted nothing.

"There is one thing I want;" said Anna, for her heart was melted, and she stretched out her arms to meet the embrace of her friend. "I want you to pray for me. I am a weak and sinful creature; but I cannot tell you all now. No, Mary, you must



leave me, for I am so very sinful, that even your presence is not welcome to me."

And thus they parted for the night.

In the morning Anna was not disposed to be more communicative, nor Mary to intrude upon her confidence; so they both went through the day with more than usual reserve. But Mary's suspicions were awakened, and having heard that Frederick Langley was in the neighbourhood, it was not difficult to surmise the rest. There was beside, a slight appearance of preparation in Anna's room, and Mary's fears were wrought up to the most agonizing apprehensions.

It was on the night before that fixed upon for the departure of the lovers, that, after a long season of communion with her own heart, Mary entered the chamber of her friend, determined not to leave it, until she had wrung from her a full confession.

Anna was still up, and busy with something which she hastily concealed. Her looks were confused, and her whole manner was constrained, and embarrassed.

"Anna," said Mary, seating herself, and extinguishing her candle, "I have come to talk with you, for a little while. I know that my company is an intrusion, and I once thought, that if ever I should arrive at this conviction, I should leave you for ever. But I am not yet prepared to leave you, Anna, though you seem disposed to shake me off. So I have come to ask you a single question, and because I am in earnest; in serious, and sad earnest, I will speak at once to the point; and now ask you, Anna Clare, if

you are not, in the secret of your heart, harbouring a design, upon which you cannot, before you go to rest this night, pray for the blessing of Almighty God?"

Anna bent her eyes upon the ground, and was silent for some time; but at length she roused herself.

"I will never be guilty of telling a deliberate falsehood to you, or to any one; and since, by evasion, I should stand as much committed in your eyes, as by a disclosure of the whole truth, I will tell you, that to-morrow night, Frederick Langley will set off for Italy;—at eleven o'clock, his carriage will pass your gate, and,—I am to be his companion!"

A long silence followed, for Anna had nothing more to say, and Mary was not prepared for so sudden, so awful, a termination to all her love, and all her kindness. Thoughts of tenderness, mingled with the recollection of early years, rushed upon her, too powerfully for utterance; and she burst into tears.

"I know what you are thinking of," continued Anna, "you are thinking of my ingratitude to you. And, ah! Mary, when I am laid upon my death-bed, I shall think of it too."

"I believe I was," replied Mary, "but it was a selfish and unworthy thought." And then, taking the hand of her friend, she continued, "Let us turn our attention to weightier considerations. Let us think where that death-bed may be! But first, tell me truly, did my senses deceive me." And she questioned Anna, in such plain and homely words, that the poor victim of self-deception, who had been

cheating her understanding with the language of poetry, shrunk back, wounded and terrified, from Mary's strict and determined investigation of the truth; while all that she could venture in her own defence, was a few words about her lover's devoted and generous attachment.

"Oh! trust him not;" replied Mary, "the generosity of man wakes only while his passions sleep. And as for his love, think not of it. A few years will pass away, and he will laugh at the village girl who was the plaything of his youth; and she will be dying in that far country, where there is not a single friend to protect her."

"Mary, you do not know, it is impossible that you should know, the strength of a love like ours."

"Then, because you wander out by moonlight, and read verses, and sing love-songs together, you think you know better than we do, what belongs to true, and faithful love. Listen to me, my poor infatuated friend. I cannot speak in polished language, but I will tell you a plain truth. The man who leads you from the path of duty, and calls upon your generosity for the sacrifice of your good name, is not your lover; he is your enemy. No, though he may follow, flatter, and serve you, I repeat what I have said, he is your deadliest enemy; but he who strives to correct your foibles, who points out your faults, who loves you most tenderly, when you are serving God, even though you should at the same time, be neglecting him; with this man, you may reasonably

hope to live happily on earth,—with this man, you may hope to live more happily in heaven. I know that you look down with contempt, upon the affection which subsists between Andrew Miller and myself; but that humble man, whom you despise, would sooner part with his right hand, than he would make me a fit object for the finger of malice to point at, with scorn and derision.”

“Then will you, Mary, never look upon me nor call me your friend again?”

“That is a question which I am hardly prepared to answer. I have striven to reason with you coolly, and without throwing into the scale the least particle of individual feeling, for we ought to look up to higher considerations; but since you have asked me, I will say that I do not believe there is any circumstance in life that can tear away my deep-rooted love for you, Anna, nor any situation in which I would forsake you. I like not professions; but I do feel that in the lowest pit of wretchedness and vice, I should be ready to seek you, and if it were possible, to save you. Nay, do not weep, Anna, you surely must have believed as much as this of me before, or else my conduct has sadly belied my feelings; but I will talk no more of myself; it is for you, that I feel this torturing anxiety; for you, who have dwelt in the bosom of a kind family — who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord — are you prepared to meet the common adversities of life, without a home in your sickness, a friend in your sorrow, or



the consolations of religion in your remorse? Are you prepared to live on, from day to day, without asking the blessing of your Creator, at your lying down, and your uprising? Are you prepared to be hurried to the grave, by the hands of unpitying strangers, with no tear shed over you, no memorial, but in the wounded spirits of those who would gladly remember you no more? And this, Anna, is but an outline—but a faint sketch of the fate to which you are about to consign yourself. Fill it up, with all that you can imagine of wretchedness, and the picture will not be less true. I know too well that I have little to offer you on the other side; little, as regards the things of this world; but oh! let me intreat you to trust in Him, who can make a path for his people through the wilderness. We cannot tell when the precious manna will fall, nor discern which is the rock that will be smitten, nor say in what quarter the pillar of fire will first appear; but we know that his promises are sure, and that he will never leave, nor forsake his suffering people. Into his hands I commit you, beloved friend of my youth, farewell, and may his blessing be upon you.”

On the following morning, a note was brought to Anna, which she read hastily, and then presented in silence to her friend. It ran as follows.

“Dear Anna,  
“I have but a moment of time to tell you, that I still keep to my purpose of going to night; and as a

proof how much I leave you to the liberty of your own choice, I propose the following plan. At eleven my carriage will be at the gate. You of course, will be at your window. If you are still generous enough to make me happy, you shall wave a white handkerchief and I will fly to you ; but should anything have occurred to alter your determination, and I see no sign, I will pass on, and the world will be to me a wilderness.

“ F. L.”

“ Thank God !” exclaimed Mary, “ you are not forsaken. Here is an easy escape for you. Strengthen yourself for the trial, and all will yet be well. This plan is admirable, for you will never meet again, and the temptation will be so much less.” But Anna turned away from these congratulations to hide her tears ; for Mary, in her uncontrollable exstasy, had hit upon the expression of all others least calculated to convey anything like pleasure to the mind of her friend. “ You will never meet again.”

Finding it almost impossible, for minds under the influence of such opposite feelings, to meet together through this critical day, in any thing like confidence, Mary busied herself more than usual with her domestic affairs, and Anna spent nearly the whole time in the solitude of her own room. Once, or twice, Mary knocked at her door, but as Anna opened it without *saying* a word, she made some indifferent enquiries *about ordinary* concerns, and left her to the medita-

tions of her own heart ; wisely judging, that after having said all she could when the ear of friendship was open, to urge her with repeated arguments and entreaties, would only be defeating her own purpose, by strengthening the opposition of her friend.

It was a quiet day in April, but there were no showers nor any wind, and the sun shone out upon the opening flowers ; the buds burst forth, and the bees were awakened from their long sleep ; the birds were busy with their nests, singing as they built their summer homes ; the fields were green, and the lambs, in merry troops, gambolled over the smooth lawn that lay beside the garden and orchard of Andrew Miller, who stood for a long time upon the threshold of his door, as if hesitating which he should most enjoy — the fair face of nature smiling in her loveliness without, or that which perpetually blessed his peaceful home within. You would have thought, to see that man, when he looked around him, that his cup of happiness was full, and yet, when he turned to enter, there was an expression upon his countenance that seemed to say, “ I have yet more.”

At the pleasant window of a chamber in that same house, a window that looked out upon the same lawn, and was lighted up by the same cheering sunshine, sat a melancholy creature, almost without life, and apparently without motion. That glorious sunshine fell upon her cheek, as upon a marble statue ; that fair landscape smiled before her in vain ; and those merry birds, — what was their ceaseless song to her

who knew neither sound of joy, nor sight of loveliness; to whom the heavens were darkness, and the earth a desert?

The evening came, the gray, still evening; and the birds that had been busy all the day, folded their weary wings to rest. The curtain of night fell silently, and Anna was alone,—alone, in the presence of her God.

It is not difficult to cherish in our hearts an evil purpose, while engaged in the active scenes of life, and associated with beings, frail and erring as ourselves; for the bustle of business, and the dissipation of society, both tend to drown the whispers of the still, small voice. But in the solitude and silence of the night, when we are taught from our cradles to believe, and feel in our inmost souls, that an Almighty being is watching over us; that he who spangled the blue vault with an innumerable multitude of stars, and led forth the silver moon along her pathway in the heavens, and spread the silent and refreshing dews upon the earth, and hushed the winds at his bidding, is regarding with eyes of benignity and love, the creatures whom he has sent, for some wise purpose, to trace out their pilgrimage through a life of trials and temptations.—Ah! it needs a heart of adamant, to look out upon a slumbering world, and up to the glorious heavens, and yet keep this evil purpose unchanged.

Anna Clare was more than commonly alive to the sweet influences of nature, and perhaps no other



medium could have been found so effectual, to restore, to its proper tone, her wandering and distracted mind.

There was a sound of distant wheels.—No! it must have been the rustling leaves of the poplar, for this was not the hour;—again, it was no deception, she heard them afar off, and they came nearer and nearer, to the appointed place, and stopped. For a few moments all was silence, and then the carriage rolled on, and the sound died away upon the breeze. It was but for a few moments that her spirit had to struggle with temptation, but were they not ages in their intensity of suffering?

## CHAPTER XII.

LET not those who make great sacrifices to duty, be led on by the hope of immediate reward. When a limb is severed from the human body, the first terrible stroke is not all that has to be borne; there are after seasons of pain and suffering, that must, inevitably, be endured: and when an idol of clay is broken in the dust, it requires time for humbling reflection, before its votaries can be convinced of the reality.

Mary had not entered the chamber of her friend, because she wished her to look for assistance to a higher power. She therefore retired into her own closet, and spent the dreaded time in prayer; but she too heard the carriage wheels, and knowing when they passed on, that her friend was no longer in danger, she rose up with the thankfulness of one who has experienced a merciful deliverance.

Those who would devote themselves to the service of their fellow-creatures, must be prepared for many an ungrateful return—for many a heart-rending repulse; to which, nothing but the consciousness of

being about their Master's business, can reconcile the sensitive mind. Those who would save a sufferer from death, must often present an unwelcome draught to lips that loathe its bitterness ; and those who would save a soul from sin, must bear with that rebellious soul in all its struggles to return ; for it is not by one tremendous effort that the bonds of earthly passion can be broken. The work in which they are engaged, is a work of patience, not of triumph ; and there must be long seasons of painful endurance, of watchfulness, and prayer, which nothing but a deep and devoted love to the heavenly Father, whose service they are engaged in, can possibly enable them to sustain.

When Mary entered the chamber of her friend, early on the following morning, she found her agitated, feverish, and restless.

"I am not resigned," were the first words that Anna spoke ; "I wish I had gone."

"But you must be convinced, that the choice you made, was a right one."

"I can hardly say that it was my choice. I wished to go, and yet had no power to wave the handkerchief ; there was something so still, so calm, all around me : and I thought of that beautiful hymn, which we learned when we were children, ' Though no man seeth thee, yet God seeth thee ; ' and it seemed to strengthen me for my trial."

"Then let us together offer up our thanks to Him, who stretches out his hand for the deliverance of his

rebellious creatures, when they will not struggle for themselves."

"But I am not sufficiently thankful yet, Mary; perhaps the time may come when I shall bless you for what you have done."

"Oh! not me, Anna; you have nothing for which to bless me; you should only bless that Being, who gave me a heart to love, and a wish to save you."

"But I am not saved yet;—I commit no sin, because I have no temptation. I submit, because resistance is vain; but I do think, that if Frederick Langley would come back and speak one kind word to me, I would go with him at this instant."

Mary inwardly thanked God that such a trial was not likely to be repeated; and she bore with Anna's murmurings, day after day, without reproach, and even without repining; for she believed that brighter hours would come, and that her beloved friend would live to see more clearly, and to feel more calmly.

And here let us pause awhile, to enquire what is the cause, and the root of that suffering, which an inexperienced writer has attempted to describe, it may be, from her own want of mental power, with a feeble and useless pen. Is it not in the cultivation and encouragement of those feelings which are not calculated to afford either satisfaction to ourselves, or benefit to others?—in the planting in our own garden, those seeds which are only capable of ripening in a totally different soil?—in an inordinate desire after those pleasures which, however lawful in

themselves, are, and ought to be, unattainable to us; and a consequent looking down upon such as are set before us, with indifference or disgust? Oh! that we would teach ourselves—that some kind friend would teach us, rightly to value, and properly to use, that wisdom that is given to man, that he may profit withal;—that wisdom which compels us to believe, that he who created us knows best for what situation we are most fitted, in a world where so many different degrees of moral and physical beauty are, no doubt for wise purposes, permitted to exist; and that when we are desiring what belongs not to our own sphere, and indulging in the vain thought, that in some other station we could be more virtuous, and more happy, we are in fact murmuring against the decrees of Providence, and arraigning the wisdom of Almighty God.

What is the sum of misery brought upon the world by this dreadful delusion, no pen can describe. How many with wounded spirits, and aching hearts, have looked back to the morning of life, when this important choice was made, betwixt contentedness with the things that are, and desire of those which might be! In thousands of instances it has been the root of that fatal malady, which is called a broken heart; and in the present, it well nigh cost the sufferer her life;—her wretched, earthly, perishable life, not that which is eternal: for in the quiet hours of a lingering illness, other thoughts arose that wore a different character. The strength of earthly

passion was subdued, the clouds of earthly prejudice were swept away, before the clear dawn of undeniable truth ; late, awfully late, when it first shines upon the steps that are descending to the grave, — when it first lights up the eye that is about to close for ever.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN the jocund summer came, and spread her smiling flowers in the path of Andrew and Mary, Anna was not able to participate in their enjoyment. She was too feeble to take exercise, and the evening dews, to others so cool and refreshing, to her were chill, and damp, and cheerless. But she never allowed herself to complain; she never spoke of Italy, and the name of Frederick Langley never passed her lips: only, sometimes when she drew shivering to the fire, Mary could see that the tears were in her eyes, and then she knew that her spirit had flown away to distant lands.

It was but twelve short months since that proud family came into the neighbourhood. Since Anna was rich in the possession of youth, and health, and happiness; and now what a picture of melancholy did her faded form present; — of melancholy, but not of despair; for she never murmured, and sometimes her countenance would be lighted up by a smile, that showed how much she was striving against



the tide of painful and contending emotions, which often seemed ready to rush in and overwhelm her reason. It was a faint and sickly smile, that told more than tears, what her heart had passed through. Like the first gleam of sunshine, on the landscape which the tempest had laid waste :—the first budding of the trees, when the whirlwind has torn their branches.

The autumn of this year was unusually mild and genial ; and so gentle and imperceptible was the progress of Anna's disorder, that Mary saw no reason for alarming apprehension. It was, undoubtedly, a frail tenement to which her spirit held, but there were no symptoms of immediate danger. Much depended upon care and quiet ; and here all circumstances were in her favour, for no one could have a better nurse than Mary, and no place could be more quiet than the village of L——, when the Langleys were not there to disturb it.

Day after day passed on with its little routine of domestic duties ; rumour was silent, and scandal slept, for Anna Clare was ill, and poor, and those who had once envied, could now afford to pity her.

On one fine Sabbath morning in September, when Mary returned from church, she found that her friend had risen without any assistance, had dressed herself, and was seated in a high-backed arm-chair, formerly occupied by her father.

“ You should not have done this,” said Mary ;  
“ you know it is too much for you.”

“ I believe now that it is too much for me, but I did not think so an hour ago. Perhaps it might be the effect of fever, but I felt capable of any thing ; so much alive, that while the church bells were ringing, I fancied I could really go along with you ; and now I have hardly strength to tell you how foolish I have been.”

Mary begged she would take some refreshment, and tell her at some other time ; but it would not do, she was all animation and excitement, and could not be silent.

“ Mary, I have been praying this morning that I may live till — till — he returns from Italy. You will allow me to see him then, for there can be no harm in seeing him when I am so near the grave. I have thought of all that I will say, and indeed, Mary, it is not of earthly love, but of heavenly, that I shall talk to him then ; and it may be, when he sees how I am changed, that he will listen to me. I will tell him of the hours we have both wasted, of the time that may yet be redeemed, and surely he will listen to me ; and oh ! Mary, if it be the will of heaven that I should at last be instrumental in his good, it will repay me for all that I have suffered.”

Here their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a neighbour, a young woman, who was on friendly terms with both, and often came to sit with Anna, when Mary was engaged with more active occupations. The young woman took a seat, and they talked together about the affairs of the vil-

lage, the Sunday-school, the clergyman, and the sermon, to which they had that day listened. Mary all the while stealing anxious glances at the countenance of her friend, now more than usually animated, and beaming with a strange and radiant beauty, that was almost supernatural. On her cheek there was a glow so bright and vivid, in her eyes such clear and dazzling splendour, and upon her smooth forehead such calm and unearthly paleness, that it seemed as if, in compassion to her young spirit, the last awful struggle, the last terrible separation, had been done away, and its earthly companion had been permitted to pass into the regions of eternity, refined and pure as that spirit itself.

Mary gazed for some time, thinking little of the conversation, until suddenly attracted by the sound of a never-to-be-forgotten name.

"Speaking of the school," said the young woman, "reminds me of the Langleys. Have you heard the news? that old Sir Thomas is dead, and the young gentleman, now Sir Frederick, is coming down with his bride to take possession of his estates?"

A deadly paleness stole over the countenance of the poor invalid, and a cold shivering crept slowly over her whole frame.

Mary had time to conceal her friend from the observation of her visitor, by standing up, and arranging the pillows upon which she leaned; while her eye caught the shadow of a heavy cloud, which

she pointed out, fearing it portended rain ; in consequence of which the young woman took a hasty leave, and returned home.

With Anna all suffering was now suspended ; and for a few moments, life itself seemed to be extinct. When she again opened her eyes, she was stretched upon her own bed, and Mary was bending over her. It was some time before returning consciousness brought back the whole truth in its terrible reality : but it came at last, and, pressing the gentle hand which had been chafing her temples, earnestly and affectionately between both her own, she looked up into the face of her friend, and said, in a faint but audible whisper, “ So soon, Mary ! I did not think it would have been so soon.”

From this time she never spoke again of Frederick Langley, nor made the least allusion to any circumstance connected with him. She was quiet and peaceful, and resigned to die ; — to die, but not to live.

It appears an easy and a pleasant thing, to the soul that is weary of the toils of mortality, to lay down the burden of the flesh, and soar away into a higher realm of purer and more ethereal existence ; and thus, no sooner is the future shrouded in darkness, than to die becomes the choice of the sentimentalist, in preference to a patient endurance of the ills of life.

Anna Clare had felt for a long time that she was gently and gradually passing away from the world,



or rather that the world was losing its importance, and even its place in her visions of futurity ; and, therefore, she concluded that death must be at hand : yet, had she fondly pictured to herself one scene before the last, and dwelt upon it with a childish intensity of interest ; a scene, in which her lover should return, and beholding her altered form so wasted by sickness and sorrow, should listen to her parting prayers, and let her last admonitions sink deep into his heart. For this she had made frequent and earnest supplications, and for this she had felt willing to die ; and, perhaps, if the truth were fully known, she had appropriated to herself some little merit for the generosity of the sacrifice, and had been somewhat charmed by her own disinterestedness of feeling, — a disinterestedness that was sorely put to the test, when she found that he, on whom she had bestowed so much concern, had chosen for himself another companion through the pilgrimage of life ; and that, if its rough passages were to be smoothed for him by a female hand, that hand must not be hers. Night and day, this humbling truth, with all its heartless and dreary accompaniments, was present to the mind, until death became no longer her choice, for to her it seemed impossible to live.

To go forth again into the wilderness, after having pined in the desert ; — to set sail again upon the stormy ocean, with frail bark, and doubtful pilot, with trembling compass, and shattered mast ; — to meet again the crosses, and disappointments, and

vexations of life ; with hopes that have been blighted in the bud, and desires that have failed, and patience that has not had its perfect work, requires more true fortitude, and resignation to the divine will, than to draw back from the brightest earthly prospects, and sink into an early grave : and yet so it was with the miserable invalid, that her disease made no progress, and she found herself, after the expiration of the winter months, not only alive, but evidently gaining strength ; and painful duties, which in her weakness she had set aside as utterly impracticable, now came crowding upon her in terrible magnitude and hated reality. And then the indescribable gloom, and darkness of that little chamber, in which she first arose from her sick bed, and looked out again upon a world, which presented nothing to her perverted eye but an interminable waste of barrenness.

How little do we know ourselves ! Anna Clare had imagined, that in the calmness with which she had welcomed the approach of death, there was mingled no inconsiderable share of willing submission to the will of a gracious and overruling Providence ; but where was that submission now ? Alas ! it had only been conditional ; for no sooner was the decree gone forth, that she must live, and not die, than her heart was torn with repining, and her cup of wretchedness was full.

There is nothing more selfish than melancholy ; and lamentable it is to find, that the sentimental world have invested this absorbing malady with a

kind of interest which makes it rather sought than shunned by vast multitudes of young ladies who, too indolent to exert themselves, hang their heads for weariness ; grow sallow for want of exercise, and sigh for want of fresh air ; who read novels for want of rational excitement ; fall in love for want of something else to do ; fancy themselves heroines because they are, in fact, nothing ; and drawl out, to troops of confidential friends, long histories of imaginary troubles, because they know no real ones. The victims of this disease may be known by their perpetually babbling about pains and palpitations. Nerves occupy their attention when they wake, night-mare when they sleep, and self always. Their dearest friends may sicken and die, they are too languid to nurse them ; a miserable population may be starving around, they are too delicate to feed them ; afflictions, privations, and crosses, may be sent amongst the circle in which they exist — they “ have a silent sorrow,” so deep-seated and overwhelming, that they can neither pity nor relieve them ; and they would rather give a lecture on their own distresses, than listen to the rejoicing of a multitude. If they escape the temptation of a sinful world, to which their minds are peculiarly open, from having had raised up in them a false appetite, a craving for unwholesome food, it is but to drag on a neglected, weary, and loathed existence, and to arrive at the confines of the grave without having gathered one flower to sweeten it ; and to look forward into eter-



nity without having insured one rational ground of hope to glimmer in the gulf of darkness.

Such is the history of the last stage of the existence of many a melancholy young lady ; who, while she was young, might very beautifully have hung her harp upon the willows, and the world at first might have sighed over its silent chords, and pitied the mute minstrel : but neither a silent harp, nor a mute minstrel, will long engage the sympathy of the world. We must either play for its pastime, or labour in its service. Its stirring communities extend not their patronage to any quiescent member, and if we will sit down by the way side, while our more energetic companions pass on, the inevitable consequence will be, that we shall be left behind, if not actually trampled under their feet.

any thing short of payment in full, she muffled herself up, and leaning on the arm of her faithful friend, walked, to her own amazement, quite up to the cottage, without any extraordinary fatigue.

Phebe's little room had been swept and sanded. The door was set open to admit the scent of sweet-brier, and southern-wood; the kettle was humming on the fire; and she herself, with neatly pinned kerchief, and white apron, sat beside the open window, poring over the pages of her Bible; with which she was too fully occupied to observe that any one approached; but when she did look up, and saw the face that was dearest to her on earth, she met that altered countenance with the welcome of a mother to her child; for she had rocked Anna Clare in her cradle, and sung her to sleep on her bosom, and knelt at the death-bed of both her parents.

“Poor thing!” said Phebe, when she had a little recovered herself, “you must have been very ill; I am sure you must; or you would have come to see me before: but more especially, you would have let me nurse you, for sometimes, when trouble is nearest, kenn'd faces are dearest. That was a sad day to me, and a heavy heart I had, when I asked if I might go and be with you, and they told me, as if from yourself, that, “Miss Clare would rather be alone.” So I thought most likely, poor thing! she's out of her mind, and then I feared it would shortly be all over with you; though I can't say you look so bad as I expected.”

At this time Anna was looking much better than she really felt ; for Phebe's severe, though unintentional reproof, had called into her cheeks the burning blush of shame.

She had indeed been ill, but not for a long time so ill as to prevent her seeking the cottage of her old nurse ; whose well-meant kindness she had rejected, purely from a desire to resign herself more entirely to the indulgence of her own secret and selfish sorrow.

"Aye," continued the old woman, "I knew you must be very bad, for you were never one to neglect a tried friend ; but, thank God, I have lived to see you out again, so we wont spend the time in talking over troubles. Sit down, and I will tell you how I am getting on, for I dare say you are anxious to know." Anna sat down, and though she could not force herself to express much anxiety, her talkative companion nevertheless went on.

"Well then, when all was sold up, — but I said I would not talk of troubles — the executors provided me with this cottage ; and the next thing was to find something to do. For a long time, I was, I must say, rather hardly put to it ; but as soon as I heard of the family coming back to the Hall, I made bold to go and ask for the washing. And, though I did not think the lady very pleasant at first, my request was granted, no doubt, through the kindness of Sir Frederick ; for he followed me out by the back gate, and asked about the family, I mean about you, and I told him you were dying of a bad illness, all owing to that cold you

caught, when you were away so long in the North ; after which he asked me no more questions, but told me my request should be attended to, and went back into the house. The very next day, who should I see coming in at my door, but Sir Frederick himself. He looked round at first, as if to be sure that no one was here ; and then, taking out his pocket book, unfolded several notes, and chose out a bill of fifty pounds. He then began, I thought rather awkwardly, to say that he feared Miss Clare might want many things in her illness, which the Millers could not afford ; and therefore he had come to leave some money with me, for her especial use, to be laid out without her knowledge.

I looked at the note, and I saw the fifty as plain as I see that book ; nay I believe, I looked twice before I ventured to speak my whole mind ; but I did at last ; and told him, that Miss Clare would never thank any body for taking money privately for her ; that she had friends in her own station of life, that would not see her want ; and if they failed her, there was me ; poor, and old, though I was ; yet I thanked him he had put it in my power to work for her ; and I knew that Miss Clare would at any time, rather have a sixpence of my earning than a hundred pounds of his. I then begged his pardon for my freedom, but I said I had lived long with your family, and I had never known any of you stoop to do a mean action ; and I did think it would be mean for me to take money for those who had no right to it. Now tell me

if I did wrong, for I had you in my heart all the time, and I tried to speak as you would have spoken ; else, may be, I might have taken the money, for I knew you wanted it ill enough."

"Thank you, thank you," said Anna, "you did perfectly right." And the indignant flash of her eye sufficiently confirmed her words.

They then talked on other subjects, and Anna felt more cheerful than she had done for many past months.

"You shall not go home and tell them that I would not give you a cup of tea ;" said the old woman, and she rose up, and bestirred herself, that her young mistress, as she always called her, might be refreshed in time to return before it was late. Anna could not refuse her hospitality, and it was wonderful with how much relish she partook of Phebe's tea, and cakes hot from her oven.

It was a clear and quiet afternoon in April ; so still and cloudless, that all things seemed to acknowledge the influence of the sabbath, except the rooks, that were wheeling about over-head with as much noise as if the world depended on the building of their nests, and the rearing of their young.

"There is but one thing that troubles me," said Phebe, as they walked together down the lane, "and if I might make bold to ask you, I think it would be a comfort to me ; just to come and read to me, sometimes, when you are quite well ; but not before ; for I never was a scholar, though I can spell something out in the Bible, but the tracts that Mrs. Miller leaves



me, I cannot puzzle them out at all. This good woman does sometimes read them to me, and says she would do it oftener, but she has no time; for it is wonderful how much she does in the village, besides attending to her family, and teaching her brothers and sisters their lessons."

"Teaching them their lessons!" exclaimed Anna, for a loud peal was now rung upon her conscience, and she seemed in one moment to awake to a full and perfect sense of her own negligence and ingratitude.

"Good night, Phebe," said she, when they parted at Andrew's door, "send for me whenever you are at liberty, and I will come and read to you."

With an altered manner, Anna that evening joined the family of her friend. She was, it is true, much distressed, when looking back upon her past life; and while they all knelt down in prayer together, her cheeks were bathed with tears of sincere and heart-felt penitence. But now it was an active sorrow that she felt; a sorrow that powerfully urged her to begin a new life, and redeem her lost time. In the morning, however, the difficulties attending upon the commencement of a different course, appeared much greater than they had done, with the stimulus of the evening to oppose them; and she lay awake a long time, pondering upon the possibility of performing the arduous duties which presented themselves.

Could she really go down to Mary, with a formal proposition to take upon herself the education of her brothers and sisters? It was almost impossible! For



besides involving herself in a long series of disagreeable occupations, it would seem like an acknowledgment of her past culpability, and neglect; and she felt little disposition to bear the triumphant looks which she knew that Andrew would throw towards his wife, while he seemed to say, "So she has come to her senses at last."

"No, no," said she, covering up her head with the bed-clothes, "I cannot do it yet!" and then she thought of all the little Newtons, one after another, their red faces, and coarse hair, their chilblains and worsted stockings, and corduroy trowsers; and she was quite sure it was impossible; so she took her breakfast once more in her own room; but the morning was fine, and she soon after arose, and opening her window, looked out into the garden, where Andrew was digging, and Mary standing beside him in earnest conversation.

"I should be very glad to do it," said the husband, as he stamped upon his spade; "but these times are so pinching, and really our expences this year will be very considerable. Let me see: how much would a quarter's schooling be?"

"I would not ask you," said Mary, "if I had time to teach her, but you know I have as much as I can manage with our own young people."

"I wish that trouble was off your hands:" said he of the spade.

"That it might be," replied the wife, "if I would consent to let my father send them to school; but I

always put him off, thinking it will be a nice thing for Anna when she recovers."

"In my opinion she never will recover," murmured the husband; and then they went to another part of the garden, leaving Anna to digest, with what appetite she might, the bitter food they had so unconsciously set before her.

After a struggle of a few moments, her decision was made, and she went down to her friend, who was already surrounded by her little flock, Mary's own words, "a nice thing for Anna," still ringing in her ears.

"I have come to help you, Mary," said the invalid.

"Thank you, thank you," replied her friend, "but you must take this chair by the fire, from which she arose, and placing before Anna the table, and the desk, left her for a while, on the plea of other engagements, kindly thinking that her first instalment into office would be more easily endured alone.

It is scarcely possible that any one should wish to know how the business of that morning was carried on. Those who have laboured in a school with a sad heart, and a weak body, know that it is an occupation which bids defiance to all the powers of description.

Many were the anxious glances turned towards Mary's stately clock that day, both by the scholars and their poor mistress. At last, in its own good time, it struck the welcome hour of twelve; and

books were violently shut, and slates clattered, and bonnets with one string snatched up, and nailed shoes grated on the floor, and benches replaced, and all the noisy party took their leave; except little Martha, who, silently stealing towards Anna's chair, and looking up into her face with affectionate concern, said, "I am glad to see you better again, Miss Clare."

"Thank you, my love," said Anna, as she tried to lift the little girl upon her lap; but finding she had not yet sufficient strength, she bent down her face to Martha's rosy cheek, while her tears fell fast, and mingled with the glossy ringlets of the child.

In the afternoon the boisterous little party came again; but Mary insisted upon attending to them herself during half the day, until Anna was stronger and better able to bear the fatigue. She would very gladly give them up to her in the morning, for she had many other occupations which she could not well neglect; so soon, however, as Anna was able to bear with them all the day, she made no farther resistance, and it was astonishing how cheerful the young schoolmistress found herself when the clock struck five, and she felt that a very important, though somewhat irksome duty, had been faithfully performed.

The evenings were now growing long enough for a walk after tea, and Anna could not deny herself the luxury of walking alone, sometimes with a volume of Byron in her hand, and sometimes with the reins

of imagination let loose, that fancy might roam at will over the pleasures of the past, and feast again from the forbidden tree ; the inevitable consequence of which was, that she always returned from these walks with an additional cloud upon her brow, and a heavier load upon her heart.

“ Are you going to walk this evening, Anna ?” said her friend, one day as they were just finishing an early tea.

Anna replied that she was ; and Mary then proposed that she should go with her to see a poor girl who had been dreadfully burnt, to which Anna, not being able to state her objections, reluctantly consented.

On their way, Mary told Anna the history of this poor creature, whose recent accident, indeed, formed the only incident of any interest, in her whole life ; for she was a pauper from a distant parish, about the age of sixteen, who had come to exchange her services for her bread, in the family of a very small farmer in the village of L——. It was supposed, that having risen one morning early to light a fire, she had fallen asleep while blowing it ; for when her shrieks had roused the family, she was found lying upon the hearth, but never was able to explain what was the real cause of the accident.

The mistress of the house, neither very kind, nor very prudent, could only shriek in concert with the girl ; and the master added his bass, wondering why people need have such creatures in their houses ; for

she had always eaten more than she was worth : and when the doctor was sent for, he would not stir an inch towards the place, before he had informed himself to what parish she belonged, and whether he was likely to obtain a full and speedy remuneration for his pains.\*

“She is a great sufferer,” continued Mary, “she has been laid upon her bed without the power to move, for ten weeks ; and there is no prospect of her recovery. Yet no one cares whether she lives or dies, except for the trouble she is to them. She has so many frightful wounds, that she requires a great deal of support, and I do believe she is grudged by the parish every morsel that she eats. And all day long, her master and mistress are quarrelling about her ; the one declaring that she cannot do without some help to nurse her, and the other saying all kinds of cruel things in her hearing, about parish beggars hanging on their hands, and eating the bread out of their mouths.”

By this time the two friends had reached the house. They knocked, and after waiting a long time, the door was opened by a slovenly woman, who let them in, with many complaints, that she was now never fit to be seen by any one. She then showed them into a little sleeping room, on the ground-floor, where, on a narrow bed without hangings, lay the poor orphan girl ; her cheerful rosy face peeping over the

\* A fact.



bed-clothes that were none of the whitest. Her eyes were wild and bright with fever, her teeth white and prominent, while, with every appearance of hunger, she was gnawing a well-picked bone; not that she was really too scantily supplied, but the state of her body occasioned a continual craving for food. On seeing Mary, she laid down the bone and smiled; for this was not her first visit, and she had never heard any one speak to her so kindly as Mary in her whole life.

Mary asked her a few questions, and then, determined that her friend should see for herself what real misery there was in the world, she folded down the bed clothes before she could be aware of her intention, and exposed, to her astonishment and horror, the whole of one shrivelled arm and shoulder.

"I dare say you think it looks very bad, maam," said the poor girl to Anna; "but dear me! I'm quite easy now. It's when they move me that I suffer most. Perhaps I don't bear it so well as I might; for they tell me I should not complain; it's they that ought to complain who have all the trouble; and a deal of trouble they have, I'm sure, though it's no fault of mine. It's ten weeks now, maam, since it happened; and if it was not for this good lady, I should feel the time long; but she comes every two or three days, and then it's something to think about between times, so that I get on very well, except for the dressings and the movings, as I said before."

"*And you want for nothing?*" asked Mary.



“ Oh ! no, nothing. I have everything I can desire.”

“ And your mistress is kind to you ?”

“ She ’s kind in her way, maam ; but that ’s very different from your way.”

Mary then offered to read to her, requesting her to choose out of a number of tracts, or, if she preferred it, a chapter of the Bible. The girl chose the latter, and while Anna sat listening to Mary’s gentle but untutored voice, she could not help wondering how it was that she felt so much happier that evening than when she walked out alone, or with only Byron for her companion.

“ This you must allow to be a real misery, said Anna, when they left the house.

“ I should indeed say it was a real misery,” replied her friend,” if he who sends afflictions to try his creatures did not bountifully dispense his mercies too. I have seen this poor child often, yet have I never heard her complain. And if a countenance might be trusted, I should say that she was not only resigned, but cheerful. It is true, she is treated with what we should call cruelty, and neglect ; but never having known the comfort of kindness, she does not feel the want of it. She knows that she must die ; and yet I do believe this poor friendless creature is blessed upon her sick bed, with such glorious visions of a future life, as a king might wisely give his crown to purchase. Then ought not this, Anna, to be a lesson to us ; and a warning to look well into ourselves, and see, when

we complain and feel unhappy, whether the fault is not with our own hearts ; and try, whether by some act of self-denial, the giving up of some idol, or the performance of some needful duty, accompanied always by earnest and humble prayer, we cannot remove the burden from our spirits, and look with cheerfulness and gratitude upon a world, where so much is designed and calculated to give us pleasure.

On the following day Anna recollected that she had never yet fulfilled her promise to Phebe, and, therefore, when the evening came, she took with her a tract which Mary had recommended, and went to sit an hour with her old friend, whom she found in the same room, still clean and comfortable, though she was herself busy ironing and preparing an extensive assortment of clean linen for the Hall.

Anna sat down, and though her eye sometimes caught the initials of Frederick Langley, and rested for a moment upon the elegant muslin dresses spread forth before the fire, she got through with the tract much to Phebe's admiration, and with some little interest even to herself ; and when she rose up to go away, she had the satisfaction of feeling, that a kind duty had been performed to a poor, and tried, and faithful servant, who richly deserved it at her hands.

## CHAPTER XV.

ANNA Clare now began, for the first time since her illness, to think of returning to her pencil; for the mornings were bright and sunny; the family of Andrew Miller rose and breakfasted early, and her pupils never came before ten o'clock.

Her painting room, once to her, the happiest spot on earth, had been scrupulously kept by Mary, unoccupied, and undisturbed; but it was a painful thing at first to enter that room, more especially to take up her pencil and her palette, and seat herself again before her easel. For when thus seated, there came back such busy crowding images; such "fragments of disjointed things," so fraught with melancholy interest, that it was almost impossible to proceed with any hope of success. Besides, what subject to choose, became a difficult question, for all were now alike to her—except those which she dared not venture to look upon; and then, who that was qualified, either to commend or to correct, would see her performance?

Oh ! how we miss, in our accustomed pursuits, the eye whose watchful glance has been as a light around our feet ! a light, it may have been, which served only to dazzle and bewilder ; but what resplendent luminary in after-life, will ever beam upon our path with a brightness like this !

Anna at last discovered amongst her drawings, a scene on one of the lakes of North America, which she fancied might be made into a painting ; and this being safe ground to work upon, she set about it in a very diligent and laborious manner, although from long disuse, her right-hand seemed almost to have forgot its cunning.

With this work she was one day busily employed, about the hour of noon, when Mary announced, with some degree of embarrassment and confusion, a call from Lady Langley.

This lady was the daughter of an earl, whose interest had secured Sir Frederick a seat in parliament ; and for this reason, and this alone, some persons were daring enough to say that he had married her. The match, it is true, had been very speedily made up when they were both in Italy, and whatever the Lady's merits might be, it was clear to any beholder that beauty had not been the attraction, on her part at least. She was, however, a kind, patronizing sort of woman, active, and busy about other people's affairs, having none of her own, and Sir Frederick being mostly in town. It was her pride, as well as her pleasure, to stand at the head of every thing of im-

portance transacted in the village of L—— ; and having heard much of the usefulness of Mrs. Miller, she had come to talk over with her the management of infant schools, and other charitable institutions, in the hope of finding this good woman a willing instrument in her hands, for the promotion of her many, and often changing plans, for ameliorating the condition of the poor. There was, besides, a lurking curiosity in her mind to see Mrs. Miller's friend, about whom she had heard some very contradictory reports. So soon, however, as this friend made her appearance, all that had been said to her disparagement vanished from the lady's recollection ; for on the very first sight of Anna, she took to her amazingly, and determined to draw her out and to patronize her.

With her warmest feelings excited, she requested an introduction to Anna's painting room ; and looking with every appearance of delight upon the American scene, in which the most ordinary combination of prussian blue and raw sienna, gave a very imperfect idea of the distant heavens, she turned to the fair artist, and asked if she did not feel happy in her sky.

" Oh ! extremely happy," was Anna's inward response ; but she had no time to make a more audible reply, for the lady ran on with the greatest volubility, not contenting herself with generalizing about tone and colouring, but venturing fearlessly upon the sympathies and antipathies of colours ; handling, foreshortening, and bringing out ; until Anna, be-



wildered with astonishment, began to wonder whether her illustrious visitor really knew a great deal, or nothing at all, about the matter.

"Ha! you paint portraits, too!" exclaimed the lady, looking up to a likeness of William Clare, painted by his daughter. "Charming study!—What a dear old man!—quite patriarchal with his white locks! What would I not give for a portrait of Sir Frederick!" she continued, in a more emphatic and earnest tone; at the same time laying her white hand upon Anna's arm, who felt no inclination to withdraw her own, since it suffered nothing by the comparison.

"Is it possible? could I prevail with you?"

"I never paint gentlemen."

"Ah! you mean young gentlemen; you would not mind an old married man, like Sir Frederick?"

"I never go from home to paint any one."

"Indeed! that's very cruel: but, perhaps, if Sir Frederick could be prevailed upon to come to you; and yet, I don't know, it is almost impossible now to catch him for two minutes."

"I believe I must decline the honour altogether."

"Why, what is the matter? Perhaps you think I should be jealous. The last thing on earth I should think of; for, between ourselves, Sir Frederick is now so much engaged with public affairs, that he cares no more for beauty than I do for business."

"Indeed!" said Anna, with well acted astonishment.



There was a looking-glass in that painting-room (ask not why !), placed in the best possible situation ; and in this mirror, were at this time reflected the figures of the two ladies, in clear and striking contrast. The temptation was irresistible. One glance was all that Anna ventured ; but that glance was sufficient to bring the glow of womanly triumph into her face, heightening the beauty which she would not at this moment have exchanged for a diadem ; for Lady Langley was a little, hard-featured woman, with dull grey eyes, and a complexion with which all the colours of the rainbow, either singly or collectively, must eternally antipathise.

The different reflections which the tell-tale mirror had excited, followed each other much more rapidly than they could possibly be described ; and all the while the eloquent lady went on.

“ Did you ever see Sir Frederick ? He is, I assure you, the best subject in the world for a picture. His hair is not so dark as yours. Why, bless me ! (her eyes dilating to their utmost width) you are exactly like a picture I found soon after we married, hid behind a trunk. I did not observe it while you looked so pale, but now—it’s very odd, I never saw a greater likeness in my life. I remember asking Sir Frederick about that picture, and he told me some story about its being painted by an Italian artist.”

“ I should like to see it,” said Anna, with well affected curiosity, as soon as she had recovered her self-possession.

“ You shall, if I can find it ; but that is hardly probable, for I believe it was put away in one of those large, haunted rooms, at the top of the house, where no one dares to go alone. But I'll go myself, and send it to you. It certainly has more colour than you have now, and looks — I will not say younger, but happier. However, you shall see it yourself : ” and so saying, the busy lady wished them a good morning, and hurried home.

“ A good natured little woman,” said Anna, as soon as she and Mary were left to themselves. “ Sir Frederick had a fine taste for beauty.”

“ Hush, hush, Anna ; take care what you say.”

“ Nay, I would not for the world say any thing against this good lady, who seems so graciously disposed towards her humble servant ; but did you ever see any thing like her choice of colours — a bright lavender ! Nay, do not look so grave, Mary, I will not say another word if I displease you ; but do you know I have been solicited to paint a portrait of—Sir Frederick.”

“ Impossible ! ”

“ Yes, I assure you it was so ; and now, Mary, what do you say, shall I dress myself ‘ all in a green mantel,’ as ladies do in story books,

“ And hie me to Sir Frederick's Hall,  
And to his lady's bower,  
And ask the menials great and small,  
Which is the fairer flower ? ”

"I think I can trust you."

"Trust me, Mary! you may indeed trust me. For all the wealth this lady possesses, and her rank, if she could bestow it upon me, I would not place myself in such a situation."

In the course of a few hours a parcel was brought to Anna, which she took into her painting room, and unfolded alone, with the door barred, her chair placed beside the fire, and her feet resting upon the fender.

It was indeed her own picture; too like herself: for it was much the worse for the time which had passed since it was painted.

"You have been ill treated, too," said she, as she looked at the dusty edges, and the broken canvas, which never had been thought worthy of a frame. It was the same picture which had once been seized as a prize, and borne away in triumph, now rescued by the hand of idle curiosity, from the darkest lumber-room in the great mansion of him who had gazed upon it with eager admiration.

Anna looked at her poor slighted portrait for a long time, and then exclaimed, "Lady Langley, you have richly repaid me! When I saw you in the mirror I felt a moment's triumph; now yours is the triumph, and mine the humiliation. You are not conscious of what you have done; but I thank you from my heart;" and so saying, she laid the picture on the fire, and was quietly watching the smoke and flames curl over it in fantastic wreaths, when, sud-

denly recollecting that it might be enquired for, she folded it again in its cover, and never looked at it from that time ; nor is there any reason to suppose that it was ever thought of again, within the proud walls of Langley Hall.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN the first difficulty of returning to her wonted pursuits was over, Anna applied herself to them with as much diligence as ever; and in this manner the summer passed away cheerfully and contentedly, with all the household of Andrew Miller; but most of all, with Mary, for she saw that her friend was returning to her former, nay, to her better self; and this had long been the first wish of her faithful heart. Lady Langley called often, and really took a good deal of pains to cultivate an intimate acquaintance with "the lovely artist," as she called her; but Anna had the loud warning of experience still sounding in her ear, and in this instance there was little temptation to risk a second trial of her strength; for, added to her great repugnance to go to the Hall, or to meet Sir Frederick in any way, she felt so little interest in his lady, as sometimes to meet her civilities with coldness, almost bordering on contempt. And thus, in proportion as Anna endeavoured to turn away her eyes from the dazzling superfluities of polished life,



she acquired the power of perceiving and admiring much that had before escaped her notice, in her own humble walk; and with this power came also a degree of charity and general benevolence, which made it by no means a difficult task to listen, with respectful attention, to Andrew's long stories; and perhaps Mary never was happier than when she saw her husband and her friend talking and smiling together on terms of cordial familiarity.

Music and painting were to Anna almost a necessary relaxation after the dust and the drudgery of the school-room; and often, when the clock had struck the welcome hour of twelve, she would take her guitar into the garden, and seat herself in an arbour which Andrew had made almost impervious to the weather, solely for her safety and accommodation. For years she had been in the habit of composing ballads of that humble description, which, to one chance of being thought rather pretty, risk twenty of being pronounced very poor; and now, unconscious of a listener, she amused herself with singing the following words :—

MARY LEE;

A BALLAD.

“ I'd go to the world's end for thee,  
Sweet Mary Lee !  
I'd pluck the flowers of Araby,  
And bring them home to thee !



I never lov'd before,  
Sweet Mary Lee ;  
And I'll never love another,  
Though I break my heart for thee.

I listen to the nightingale,  
Because she sings like thee ;  
Oh ! I'd go to the world's end for thee,  
Sweet Mary Lee !

Shew me the summer flower,  
That has turned to the blast,  
All her sweet scented leaves,  
And kept them while it pass'd ;

Shew me the lovely woman,  
And gladly will I see,  
One who has never lent her ear,  
To man's perjury.

So shalt thou find a wiser  
And fairer it may be ;  
But not a kinder maiden,  
Than poor Mary Lee.

Her love it was not given,  
Unsought by thee ;  
She hears thy voice of kindness yet,  
Poor Mary Lee !

Look on her cheek so deadly pale,  
And on her cloudy brow ;  
And ask of thy ungrateful heart,  
Where is her beauty now ?

Oh ! it was soon to leave her  
Who was so true to thee,  
Who never would have served thee so,  
Poor Mary Lee !

She never told to any,  
What thy falsehood made her feel ;  
She bore her griefs in secret,  
But her wounds they would not heal.

And now a lonely maiden  
At evening you may see,  
Wandering on the wild heath,  
Poor Mary Lee !

Oh ! pale is now her fair cheek,  
And slender is her form,  
She neither seeks the sunshine,  
Nor shelters from the storm.

And hast thou quite forgotten  
All she was to thee,  
Hast thou not a kind thought  
For poor Mary Lee ?

Thou'rt sitting in thy bright bower,  
With thy lovely bride ;  
Weaving summer garlands,  
To bind her to thy side.

Weave them well, and gently,  
Lest they rend away ;  
Oh ! it is not flowers that can bind,  
Nor love of yesterday.

Weave them well, and fondly,  
And fair let them be ;  
But will she ever love thee,  
Like poor Mary Lee ?

Anna had finished the last verse, and was just humming it over in a kind of reverie, when she was startled by the crackling of the garden fence, and two beautiful setters rushed past the entrance of the arbour ; nor was this all—the shadow of a tall figure fell upon the walk—it was Sir Frederick himself ! He had been out shooting ; and while about Andrew Miller's fields, the sound of Anna's guitar had attracted him towards the spot where she was singing. The words he had heard before, and the air he well knew, and had often praised, when sweet sounds were not to him of such rare occurrence. He was naturally fond of music ; and as Lady Langley neither played mechanically, nor had any music in her soul, he felt the greater pleasure in hearing unexpectedly this well-remembered ditty. Indeed, for a moment he forgot every thing else ; and when he leapt over the fence, it was from a sudden impulse of feeling, without any definite design, and in the same manner he addressed himself to the songstress with the familiarity of former days, saying, it was a long time since he had heard his old favourite ballad.

It is not to be supposed that Anna could, all at once, command herself sufficiently to reply ; or that her countenance betrayed no outward sign of *inward* emotion ; for there did at first rush into her cheeks

such deep and burning crimson, as gave to her dark eyes the sparkling brilliancy of their former beauty ; but she soon recovered herself, and rising up with respectful dignity, asked after the health of Lady Langley.

Sir Frederick said no more about the ballad ; it was impossible to go on ; both felt there was no common ground on which they could meet ; every thing was too distant, or too near.

Amongst the few advantages that women possess over the nobler sex, is an indescribable sort of tact, by which, in difficult circumstances, they can apply themselves with every appearance of indifference, to common pursuits, or common topics of conversation ; and thus, by an external show of cheerfulness, and sometimes levity of demeanour, they often veil from the eye of the superficial observer, hidden fountains of deep and impassioned feeling.

In this way Anna Clare was able to talk to her companion as they walked towards the house, of the beauty of his dogs, and the scarcity of game, of the weather, the harvest, and as many other things as she could possibly think of, before they reached the door. Here she stopped ; and begging Sir Frederick would walk in, and partake of some refreshment, assured him that Mr. and Mrs. Miller were both at home, and would be most happy to offer him any thing their house afforded. But Sir Frederick declined taking advantage of their kindness, and gravely wishing her a good morning, whistled up his dogs, and walked away.

Anna rushed into the house, and finding Mary alone, threw her arms around her neck, and playfully kissing her forehead, "There," said she, "I have borne it well ! For once in your life, Mary, give me one word of unqualified praise, for I have been walking in the garden with Sir Frederick Langley, and never did the sainted mother of a convent carry herself more distant, or more erect.

"Then I will say you are a good girl," replied her friend ; "or rather, a wise and prudent woman."

"So wise and prudent, Mary, that if you were not married, we would establish a community [of holy sisters, and I would be the lady abbess."

The rigid moralist may probably be astonished that any credit should be due to Anna, for having resisted the temptation of flirting with a married man ; but let us pause a moment, to consider what flirtation is.

Flirtation, may be the idle frolic of an innocent girl ; but it too frequently is a game deeply played by a designing and self-interested woman. It may be carried on at all ages, and by all classes of society, in all scenes, and circumstances of life : in the court, and the cottage ; the crowded theatre, and the house of prayer : by the miss, and the matron ; the flaunting belle, and the fanatical devotee, who casts up her clear eyes with the solemn asseveration that she knows no sin. Deformity does not preclude the possibility of its existence, nor beauty divest it of its hideous reality. Flirtation may raise or depress the snowy eye-lid, and distort the wrinkled cheek with smiles ;

add sweetness to the melody of song, and soften the harsh tones of discord ; flutter in the ball-room in its own unblushing character, and steal under the mask of friendship upon the private peace of domestic life, like the serpent when it coils its vile and venomous folds within a bower of roses. And for what great purpose does flirtation thus work its way as a pest upon society ? Its sole object is to appropriate to itself, that which it has no power of returning ; too frequently robbing the faithful and devoted heart of the rich treasure of its best affections, and offering in repayment the distorted animation of a jaded countenance, the blushes of mimic modesty, the forced flashes of a faded eye, and the hollow smiles that simper on a weary lip.

Had Anna Clare been possessed with the demon of flirtation, she would have raised her eyes to those of Sir Frederick, with exactly the expression which she knew (and what woman with fine eyes does not know ?) would have gone nearest to the source of long buried feeling. She would have sung that silly ballad again, perhaps with trembling and hesitation, but still she would have sung it, or have tried to sing it ; and then towards the close of the performance, her eyes would have been cast down, and a tear might have stolen from beneath their long dark lashes, and her voice grown gradually more plaintive, until at last it died away in a kind of distant melody, leaving her quondam lover and herself in the most exquisite reverie imaginable ; from which she would most pro-



bably, at last have started with a pretended effort at self-mastery; and then, as she rose to leave the harbour, and while Sir Frederick stooped for her guitar, she would have pointed to the blue ribbon, by which it was wont to be supported on her fair shoulder, saying, it was the same which he gave her when in Scotland, and that she cherished such memorials of past pleasure, as all that her existence had now to make it worth enduring: and then tears again, but not too many, lest her countenance should be disfigured. By this time they would have had the choice of two paths; the one leading directly to the house, and the other round by a melancholy walk, shaded with trees, and dark with evergreens. Without any appearance of design, she would have chosen this walk in preference to the other; first stooping down to gather a little sprig of forget-me-not, and placing it near her heart. The conversation might then have been led by delicate and ingenious management to former scenes, conveying the most touching allusions to sentiments and feelings, cherished in vain, and mourned over in secret bitterness of soul. And thus, by the time they had reached the door of Andrew Miller, they might both have been at so high a pitch of excitement, that Anna might have forgotten her friend, her poverty, and her pupils, and Sir Frederick might have paid the same compliment to his lady. And after all this, Anna might have laid her hand upon her heart, as thousands have done on similar occasions, and said that she meant no harm.

She might, it is true, have done nothing, and said nothing, which, singly examined and considered, bore the stamp of evil ; but what a farce, what a folly, is this self-exculpation : for by these secret movements from the side of virtue, of which no earthly judge can convict us, we place ourselves immediately on the side of vice ; and to the early practice of this system of manœuvring, though apparently innocent, and too often pleasing in itself, how many have to look back with sorrow and regret from the gloomy close of a despised and friendless old age ; it may be, from the miserable abodes of folly, and wretchedness, and crime. The weight of culpability rests not upon any individual circumstance ; it is the manner, it is the motive, it is the feeling by which every act and word is accompanied, which constitutes the sin : and a deep and deadly sin it will be to many in the great day of account, when their secret thoughts are laid open.

Oh ! that women would be faithful to themselves ! It makes the heart bleed to think that these high-souled beings, who stand forth in the hour of severe and dreadful trial, armed with a magnanimity that knows no fear ; with enthusiasm that has no sordid alloy ; with patience that would support a martyr ; with generosity that a patriot might be proud to borrow ; and feeling that might shine as a wreath of beauty, over the temples of a dying saint :—it makes the heart bleed to think, that the noble virtues of *woman's* character should be veiled, and obscured,

by the taint of weak vanity, and lost in the base love of flirtation: making herself the mockery of the multitude, instead of acting the simple and dignified part of the friend, the wife, or the mother: degrading her own nature, by flaunting in the public eye the semblance of affection, when its sweet soul is wanting;—polluting the altar of love by offering up the ashes of a wasted heart. Oh! woman, woman! thousands have been beguiled by this thy folly, but thou hast ever been the deepest sufferer! Thine is a self-imposed and irrevocable exile from all, for which the heart of woman pines in secret; over which it broods in her best hours of tenderness and love. Talk not of domestic happiness—it can be thine no more. The plague-spot is upon thy bosom, and its health, and purity, and peace, are gone for ever. Thou hast fluttered forth upon the giddy winds, like the leaf that wantons from the bough; the same uncertain blast may lay thee at the root of the parent stem, but it will only be to fade, and wither, and die. Oh! dream not of returning, when tired of idle wanderings; for thy return can only be that of the weary dove to her forsaken nest, cold, and cheerless, and desolate!

## CHAPTER XVII.

FOR some weeks after this time, the attention of Lady Langley was too much occupied by an invalid brother, lately arrived from Spain, where he had been wasting his time and his constitution, to allow her any leisure to think of the fair artist; who consequently, pursued her morning, noon, and evening duties, without fear of interruption:—duties that became every day more easy, from the diligent and faithful manner in which they were performed:—

“Sweet are the uses of adversity.”

And sweet is the return of the willing spirit after it has tasted the bitterness of disobedience. But Anna Clare was not yet to find her “perfect rest.” Temptation was in store for her, against which she was to defend herself, without the aid and counsel of her friend.

Seated one day amongst her little flock, listening to the monotonous recitation of dry lessons, she was surprised by the following note from the hall:—

“Lady Langley begs the greatest favour upon earth of her, who alone has the power to grant it. Lord Carrisbrooke has returned, the shadow of his former self. The doctors have pronounced his case incurable,—he fails daily. In a few months, perhaps weeks, nothing will be left to me of my only brother, but——his likeness, if you consent to oblige me. I know the task will be difficult, for he is an invalid in every sense of the word. His disease is an affection of the heart, which makes him nervous and irritable in the extreme; so that, were I to engage an artist from town, it might be weeks before we could make sure of one sitting. You are on the spot, and I can send for you at the happy moment when he is most at ease. I will not insult your feelings by offering any thing of the nature of an equivalent for what no money can repay. What I ask of you, is an act of great and unmerited kindness. I think you know me well enough to believe, that I shall not be unreasonable or ungenerous; I therefore propose, in order to avoid all future difficulty on my part, and all unnecessary delicacy on yours, that you paint my brother’s portrait on the same terms for which I should employ an artist from town; and believe me, that in so doing, you will confer an everlasting obligation on your friend,

“LUCY L——”

For a few moments Anna pondered upon the contents of this note; but it was a case, which to a gener-



“ And pray, may I ask what induces you to undertake what is avowedly so disagreeable to you ? ”

“ Because I believe Lady Langley is unable to find any other person to do it for her ; and because I am poor, and want money.”

Lord Carrisbrooke was puzzled again ; and shocked at his own want of consideration, when he thought that he had been throwing difficulties in the way of one who was performing an unpleasant task for the sake of money, of which she appeared to be in great need ; for nothing else, he imagined, could have wrung from her such a confession.

The dignity with which she at first acknowledged herself to be conferring an obligation upon Lady Langley, and then such an avowal of her station and circumstances as must at once place her in a sphere immeasurably beneath himself, was a complete mystery. But Anna had purposely done this ; for she had made a strong determination, against which her pride was not able to prevail,— that she would undertake this portrait as an artist, not as a friend ; and when she saw what manner of man Lord Carrisbrooke was, she felt equally determined that he should know that she was occupying a poor, and what he would consider a contemptible, situation in society. And in order to render this disclosure as little painful as possible, she made it at first, openly and boldly, and then, thought she, “ there will be a barrier betwixt us which he will have no inclination to overstep, and I *shall have no character to support but that of a poor*



artist, defending myself by a little dignity, if it should be necessary."

Lord Carrisbrooke, finding himself foiled in all his attempts to elicit anything like amusement from his companion, began to grow weary of his position; when a happy thought struck him, and he asked Anna if she were fond of music?

"Maurice, my fellow, has learned to play wonderfully well on the guitar since we were in Spain; and he has, besides, such a tolerable voice, that I often endure his music, when I can endure nothing else. If you think you can endure it too, he shall come and play to me, for I am growing miserably restless, and making the folds of my cloak very unclassical?"

Anna said, she should like it above all things; so Maurice was called in; and, seating himself a little behind his master, cleared his voice, and began —

"I SAW my lover mount on the war-horse in his pride,  
I wish'd I was the soldier, who mounted by his side;  
Light was the feather, waving from his crest,  
Rich was the mantle he folded on his breast.  
The summer comes again, to the bird and the bee,  
But Alphonso Carnairo returns not to me!

Tell me ye wild winds, sweeping o'er the plain,  
Fell he on the battle-field, with the noble slain?  
Tell me thou pale moon, smiling from on high,  
Where sleeps my lover that near him I may die?  
The summer comes again, to the bird and the bee,  
But Alphonso Carnairo returns not to me!

I look to the blue hills that part me from my home,  
How could my young heart ever wish to roam!  
Fair is the land of the olive and the vine,  
But flowers may be smiling where bosoms may pine.  
The summer comes again to the bird and the bee,  
But Alphonso Carnairo returns not to me!"

"Enough of that ditty," interrupted Lord Carrisbrooke. "Let the poor lady seek her lover without our assistance, and think of something else."

Maurice screwed up the strings of his instrument, and began again.

"BRAID no more thy hair for me,  
Fast my hours are flying;  
Sunny dell, and flow'ry lea,  
Spread their summer charms for thee;  
Mary, I am dying!"

Lay the jewell'd wreath aside,  
Fast my hours are flying;  
Health, and peace, and hope, and pride,  
Dwell with thee, my lovely bride,  
Mary, I am dying.

Soon thy lip shall smile again,  
Fast my hours are flying;  
Grieve not for thy lover's pain,  
Sighs, and tears, alike are vain,  
Mary, I am dying!"

Lov'd and loveliest, fare thee well!  
Fast my hours are flying;  
Lonely thou wilt hear the knell,  
Solemn sound of passing bell,  
Mary, I am dying!"

Whilst Maurice sang this song, the features of his master relaxed into an expression of the deepest melancholy. The air was plaintive, and the words, though possessing little merit in themselves, were painfully touching to one, who felt himself so near the brink of the grave. Anna was struck with their aptness, and affected almost to tears, as she observed the change they had wrought; but still more so, when Lord Carrisbrooke, with that peculiar smile which is worn only by the wretched, said, in a playful and subdued voice, "Maurice, how dolorous you are: you'll sing me into my grave, before I am ready for it."

Maurice looked up with anxiety and distress.

In their exchanging glances might be read, the trust of a long-tried and generous master; and the simple and devoted love of a faithful servant, whom nothing but death could separate from his lord; and to whom that long-dreaded separation would make the world a wilderness, through which he would thenceforth be a wanderer without a home.

Anna marked the expression, and saw that, however harsh and rude Lord Carrisbrooke might be to her, he could be kind, and gentle, and familiar, even to a dependant, and an inferior.

Great obligations create strong attachments in generous minds. Lord Carrisbrooke was not prodigal of his affections, but Maurice had been to him, in a foreign land, what no one else could be. He had nursed him through long illness, humoured his caprices, and borne with his irritable temper, when

## CHAPTER XVIII.

HAD Lord Carrisbrooke thought it worth his while to practise upon his young companion all the arts of fascination, of which he had once boasted himself the master, he would probably not have excited so deep a feeling of interest, as his weakness and suffering had called forth ; and long did the intervening days appear to Anna before she was again summoned to her appointed task.

The next time the artist was seated at her easel, Lord Carrisbrook felt himself so much better, as to be able to converse with ease and pleasure ; and now to his wondering and delighted auditor, he poured forth the rich treasures of a mind, stored with almost every kind of information, selected with taste and judgment, from a life of constant amusement and variety ; and did not hold himself above the trouble of being agreeable, even in obscurity, and to a simple country girl ; for he saw that she had understanding enough to appreciate his own talents, and sensibility to feel gratified by his endeavour to please : to say nothing

of the vanity of both, which formed the chain of connection between their spirits, blending all agreeable ideas and associations into one bond of sympathy.

“Are you going to a party, Anna,” said Mary to her friend one day, as she watched her, altering a beautiful silk dress, to the fashion of the day.

“A party, Mary! how came you to think of such a thing? I am only making this frock more fit to paint in, for I am positively ashamed of going to the Hall the figure I have lately been.”

There is a look of penetration in some eyes of dark grey, which is more insupportable to the object of their scrutiny, than the flashing of more brilliant and sparkling orbs; and Mary fixed upon the face of her friend this searching expression; and Anna felt that she was looking at her, though their eyes did not meet.

It was in vain that she tried to change the current of her thoughts. She felt that she was blushing, and she felt also; that she was convicted in an act of egregious folly. At last, when she could bear it no longer, she laid down her work, and exclaimed.

“Mary, you are too deep for me. You have discovered what I was trying to conceal from myself; that I have really been taking all this pains, to make myself look more pleasing and more ladylike, in the eyes of a man, who is shuddering on the brink of the grave. I thank you from my heart, Mary, for your well timed and gentle warning. You see I am again beset with temptation. It is a hard lesson that I have to learn;

for no sooner is one branch of vanity cut off, than it puts forth another ; but if He will give me help, to whom alone belongs the glory of victory, I will be worthy of your friendship yet, Mary." And with this laudable resolution, Anna went to her own room, and after locking up her silk dress, cast a farewell glance at the mirror, before she went to her morning's occupation. It was only intended for one glance, but the wind had been busy with her raven hair ; and sorry we are to say, that Anna looked again and again ; for there were ringlets to arrange, and a pink handkerchief to adjust, so as to give a glow to her faded complexion.

Lord Carrisbrooke had again sunk into his usual state of brooding melancholy, probably from an increase of his bodily infirmities, bringing, as they not unfrequently do, an increased longing to retain a life, of which those who cling to it with the greatest pertinacity, often profess to be the most weary ; and he might besides have his own private reasons for dreading his impending doom.

Anna saw at one glance that he was worse ; and though she made no remark, yet she found many excuses for altering the folds of his cloak, that she might at the same time place his cushions more comfortably, offer him refreshments, or soothe him with kind words ; never so touching as when whispered near to the ear, in the sweet tones of womanly tenderness.

There was something in the situation of Lord Car-



risbrook deeply and painfully affecting to a sensitive mind ; and it afforded him no small degree of gratification, to find that Anna was affected by it.

He had wandered through the world as a stranger, extracting from society everything but what he most wanted ; — the communion of a kindred soul — the pure and devoted affection of a guileless and unsophisticated heart. In vain he had tried to make any lasting impression upon the feelings of woman, as he had found her, in the magic circle of fashion, glittering in deceitful charms, and decked in false smiles ; and often had he exclaimed, after retiring to his own chamber, “ My poor Maurice, loves me better than any of them.”

His sister, it is true, regarded him with what some would call passionate fondness ; and he knew, that when the hour of parting should draw near, she would be overwhelmed with anguish, and drowned in tears ; but he knew also, that her light step would skip over the church-yard before his grave was green.

And yet, what bond of union could possibly exist betwixt the haughty Lord Carrisbrooke, and the humble Anna Clare ? He, surrounded by luxury and wealth, yet suspended but for a few brief moments above the gloomy grave ; and she, a simple country maiden, apparently pursuing her homely path with patient steps. Yes, there was a bond betwixt them. The bond of sympathy, felt and acknowledged by both. Sympathy of taste, and thought, and feeling ; sympathy of high purpose, and noble sentiment ; sym-

pathy, which no difference of rank or station can subdue ; sympathy in the inward yearnings of the spirit, which struggled in vain to support its own existence ; clinging in its weakness to the veriest reeds of earth, and rejecting, again and again, the offer of that hand which alone is mighty to save.

It was in the cheerful month of June, that the noble invalid, and the young artist, sat together at an open window, during the quiet morning hours, before the Hall was disturbed by visitors, and while the dew was yet upon the grass. For now they often found both time and inclination to converse, and Lord Carrisbrooke cast his melancholy eyes around upon the clear landscape, the blue hills, the shining river, the green slopes, and the deep shadows of the trees ; but neither the fair landscape, nor the scent of summer flowers, the hum of bees, nor the song of merry birds, brought gladness to his soul, for he was losing his firm step upon the joyous earth, and looking almost his last upon the smiling flowers, and listening to the jocund birds, that would soon be winging their happy flight above his grave.

“ You will be here,” said he, as if continuing the mournful train of his reflections, “ You will be here when summer comes again, and—I,—” He paused and looked earnestly at Anna. Words were upon her lips which might have been applicable in such an hour, but she dared not utter them. How did her spirit yearn to answer, “ And you will be in heaven !” All that woman can say, with eyes that shine through

tears, was written in her countenance ; but she made no audible reply, and her companion went on, quoting the words of Antony,

“ I am dying, Egypt, dying.”

“ A fatal malady is preying upon my heart, yet I brave it out to the world, and none, but my faithful Maurice, knows that I endure any other than bodily suffering ; even he knows not the cause, but to you I will confess, that when I think of launching forth upon the boundless ocean of eternity, I feel like a fearful child, about to enter upon a region of impenetrable darkness.

“ In my ride the other day, I saw a poor woman sitting at the door of her cottage, reading her Bible ; and oh ! how I envied that humble creature, feasting upon what, to her, were the words of eternal truth.”

“ The same book,” said Anna, “ is open to all ; and it is the perfection of that volume, that its sacred truths are equally applicable, its moral precepts equally serviceable, and its religious consolations equally available, to the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the happy and the miserable.”

Lord Carrisbrooke shook his head. “ My mother forced me when a child to learn long lessons from the Bible, as a punishment when I did wrong ; and I have never been able to read it since.”

“ If you would but try, my Lord,” said Anna.

“ Will you read it to me ?” replied his Lordship.

And then he smiled as dying men have no right to smile.

"I would do anything," said Anna, in her own guileless manner, "to make you less melancholy, less desponding; and I would suffer anything, were it possible for me to be instrumental in raising your thoughts to a participation in those hopes, which alone are able to support the soul in its hour of mortal trial."

"How is this?" said Lord Carrisbrooke, and while he spoke and looked earnestly at Anna, tears, burning tears, were in his eyes; and he stretched forth his thin and wasted hand, and grasped her arm with something of unearthly energy. "My course through this world has been short and eccentric; winning the wonder of the many, and the love of the few. Had I not dived beneath the shallow surface of profession, my sated vanity might have revelled in fruition; yet have I never known from my cradle until this hour one friend who cared about my soul."

"Your Lordship has been very unfortunate! Amongst the first of earthly blessings which heaven bestowed upon me, was a faithful friend; a friend whose counsel and kindness have been as a light upon my path."

"And will you be this friend to me?"

"Impossible, my lord!"

"Why impossible?"

"Because you are a man, noble, and wealthy, and accomplished; and I am a woman, young, and poor, and unprotected."



“And for these qualities I love you better; and surely for those, you cannot respect me the less!”

“My lord, that very weakness which excites your tenderness, and that dignity which awes me into respect, are incompatible with the fair and equalizing nature of friendship.”

“Then call it love, if you will. It matters little what name is given to an intimacy like ours, to be dissolved in a few brief moments; but oh! do not leave me to myself. Come often; sit with me till you are weary; and, above all things, tell me how to make death less horrible. Ah! you are going again. Going to gather roses, and sit within your sunny bower, and listen to the birds that warble overhead, and feel the breath of summer fan your blooming cheek, and think not of the weary hours that I am spending. Indeed why should you? I am nothing to you, I can be nothing, and have no right to trouble you with my fruitless complainings.”

Anna held out one hand, while with the other she concealed her face; and wishing the miserable invalid a good morning, went her way to muse upon the various branches and bearings of the word “interesting;” a word so important in the vocabulary of the the sentimentalist, that it appears to possess the talismanic property of discovering whatever is worthy of consideration either in nature or art.

“How interesting!” exclaims the enthusiast, and immediately her beau ideal is clothed in a mantle of imaginary beauty. Within may be an empty void,

it matters not. Vanity or vice may lurk below, they are alike unheeded. Misery and disappointment may lie shrouded beneath, they are endured with the patience of a martyr. And why? Because the object is interesting, and consequently it becomes an idol.

Again—When anything earthly, or unearthly, has received the fatal condemnation of being pronounced uninteresting, how utterly hopeless and vain is every attempt to force it upon the attention of those, who have been accustomed to look only through the false medium of sickly sentiment. Unheeded, unnoticed, by them, uninteresting philosophy may labour in secret over the investigation of truth, uninteresting charity may go forth upon her errands of mercy, uninteresting resignation may watch beside the lowly bed of sickness, and offer up from unfeigned lips her last soul-felt prayer; and what to them is the incense of uninteresting piety, though it should burn upon the altar of the heart, consuming all that is gross and perishable, and purifying the immortal spirit for a new existence in the regions of eternal light.



## CHAPTER XIX.

THE ambition of doing good, is often the last effort of expiring vanity in an amiable mind, and the resolution to do good is unquestionably laudable in the abstract ; but with this excellent resolution there are not unfrequently certain accompaniments, such as these : I shall make myself valuable, I shall be more beloved, my name will be exalted among the people ; and mournful it is to observe, that the mind of woman is peculiarly liable to fall away from its high purpose, into these snares and pitfalls, which are so placed along the christian's path, that there is no footing to be found upon the pilgrimage of life, without its own temptations, and besetments.

Possessed with these aspiring hopes, Anna Clare retired to her own chamber ; and while she turned over various volumes, and referred to different texts of scripture, which she conceived might aid her purpose, there not unfrequently flitted across her mind the encouraging assurance, that “ he who converteth

a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

Having fixed at last upon the conversion of Count Struensee, Anna hastened early to the Hall on the following morning, with hope in her countenance, and triumph in her heart.

"You must read it to me," said Lord Carrisbrooke, "for there is something in your voice that charms away my evil genius."

So Anna opened her little volume, and sat down, and thought she had never been so well employed in her whole life : but, in spite of all her sanguine expectations, she could not help perceiving, that the thoughts of her noble auditor went not along with her, at least with her book, and that his eye never rested upon anything but her face, and when she closed the book as an experiment to try whether his attention was really fixed, he made no remark upon it, but seizing the white hand by which it was held out to him, pressed it to his lips, with every expression of gratitude and admiration.

"It will not do," said Anna, as she walked home that morning : and when she met the calm countenance of her friend, she was more than ever convinced that she had been wrong ; her pupils too were rejoicing in their prolonged holiday, and she herself was returning weary and dispirited, and not a little disposed to be dissatisfied with all around her.

"This picture takes you a long time to paint," said Mary ; and Anna who was conscious that it might

have been completed in half the time, felt a reproof in the remark which it was not intended to convey. "I can finish it at one more sitting," was her consolation as she went to rest that night; and she did finish it, and was more than ever convinced on the following morning, that the work of reformation was at an end, at least that its triumphs were not for her; that Lord Carrisbrooke had been amusing himself, and gratifying his own vanity by the interest he had excited in her mind; and that in order to give this interest a deeper character, he had expressed all, and perhaps something more, than he really thought, and felt, at the prospect of the awful doom that was impending.

Oh! woman, in thy mysterious and often eventful life, thou hast many a hard lesson of humility to learn; and, perhaps, none can be more painfully instructive, than that which teaches thee, that in thy noble and generous desire to serve thy fellow creatures, thou hast been aspiring too high. Learn, then, from the experience and the warning of others, learn while thy young heart is yet unscathed by disappointment, that thy sphere of merit is a lowly one; and above all things, go not forth upon the mighty ocean, in the presumptuous hope, that thou shalt be able to pilot the stately vessel into port: let the heavy prow heave on upon the billows of destruction; thy feeble help cannot avail; thou canst only be drawn within the vortex, engulfed, and lost for ever. Thy little bark is made to float amongst the shoals and shallows

of the shore, to warn the ignorant of danger, to gather up the wreck, to save the perishing, and to comfort the forlorn.

The last meeting between Lord Carrisbrooke and Anna was a painful one, through which nothing could have supported her, but the fruits of a sorrowful experience, and a heightened sense of duty.

"It is better, much better;" said she, as she walked home that morning; and yet tears were every instant starting in her eyes, and sometimes there seemed to be whispered in her ear, as if by a rebellious and unsubdued spirit, "I was but seeking to cheer the last moments of a dying man."

Unable to enter into the affairs of Mary's household, she retired to her own chamber; and here, upon reflection, she was confirmed in her belief that the path she had chosen was a wise and prudent one. The words, "touch not, handle not," were continually recurring to her mind. "These things are not for thee." Will he repent at thy bidding; who has lived to the mature age of manhood, in the habitual contempt of religion, and forgetfulness of his Creator? Will he be subdued by thy charming, whose heart is as the flinty rock! Or will thy reasoning convince him, who has exhausted the powers of an acute and penetrating mind, without having discovered the immutable excellence of eternal truth? "Touch not, handle not," but go thou into thy secret chamber, and when no eye seeth thee, offer up thy earnest prayers, *that he who knoweth the path of the eagle in the*

heavens, will turn away the wanderer from the error of his ways : and, seek not thou to be the instrument. Look out upon the sufferings of thy fellow creatures ; diligently watch the opportunity of fulfilling every duty ; search the recesses of thy own soul, and see whether thy appointed task be not sufficient, without aspiring higher.

It was some weeks after this time, at the solemn close of a sabbath evening, that Anna Clare sat alone and silent at the window of her own chamber. The golden tints of the setting sun were fading away ; the hum of the village was subsiding ; the shepherd was folding in his sheep ; the silvery dew was falling ; and one pale planet shone out from the clear and distant heavens.

How strange that, upon such a scene, the principle of evil should dare intrude ! Alas ! for our heroine ! she looked not forth with joy and thankfulness, but tears were streaming from her eyes, and she was repining, that amidst so much peace and loveliness, her path must be alone ; whether amongst flowers, or thorns. The beauty of the flowers, and the anguish of the thorns, must be enjoyed, and endured alone.

Where now was her lately acquired submission, her patience, and resignation ? Selfishness and vanity, had again been contending for the empire of her heart, and she was reaping the bitter fruit of their destructive warfare. For a short time her former self returned, to pine, and suffer ; and when she thought of the mysterious and highly gifted character, in



whose feelings she was just beginning to hold a share, when stern duty warned her to withdraw, it seemed to her, that she alone, of all mortal creatures, was singled out to resign whatever was most intimately connected with her heart of hearts.

At last, her murmuring thoughts found utterance in words.

“Every thing on earth has its little sphere of enjoyment, in which it can meet and participate with others. Coarse spirits have their social intercourse. Friend meets friend, around the humble hearth. In all the affairs of human life,—in commerce as well as religion, multitudes congregate together, and pursue in concert the great end of their existence. The very brutes—the flocks that feed upon yon sloping hill, enjoy the refreshing dews of night together. The birds have their companions in the woods, to whom they can utter a response. All the sweet flowers of night and day, have their appointed time for looking up in unison to heaven. The stars have their own bright family, shining through the blue expanse. Every intelligence in nature has its kindred essence; but I have nothing!”

Anna's complainings ceased, and she was looking out again, when the solemn sound of a passing-bell fell upon her ear—she shuddered and turned within. In the twilight she could just perceive that some one approached. It was Mary, who came with the tidings that Lord Carrisbrooke was dead. In an instant, Anna was restored to her better self. That sudden



and awful sound, and the unexpected appearance of her, who had so often stood beside her as a guardian angel, bringing a silent reproof, where none was spoken; the stillness of the hour, and the recollections of the past, all mingling together, might have overpowered a spirit more hardened and perverse than Anna's.

"Mary," said she, laying her hand upon the arm of her friend, "there is one duty which we have never, since the days of our infancy, performed together, except in public. Let us kneel down in this quiet chamber, and enter into a fresh covenant with our Heavenly Father, that we will drink of the cup which he has poured out for us, even though it should be gall and bitterness. That we will walk in the path which he has pointed out, though it should pierce our feet with thorns; and that we will never turn away, nor be unfaithful to his service, though we know that it requires us to give up all and follow him." And then, from her eloquent lips, and overflowing heart, she poured forth her gratitude and praise to that Being who had thus far conducted her through the wilderness; who had borne with her spiritual idolatries, who had given her a friend as a faithful guide, and whom she now implored to look down from his habitation in the heavens, upon the weakest worm of his creation.

Bound by fresh ties of more than earthly union, the two friends had knelt together; together they arose, and the embrace with which they separated

that night, was warm and pure, as in the days of their first love.

Her feeble steps recalled from their slight wandering, her good resolutions confirmed after their short lapse, Anna Clare went onward in the path of duty ; for she had learned to mistrust herself, and consequently to shun temptation. And having found how incompatible with true happiness is the gratification of vanity or ambition, she confined her hopes and wishes, and even her laudable desire to be of use, within the humble sphere in which her lot was cast.

On the reading of Lord Carrisbrooke's will, it was discovered that he had bequeathed the sum of one thousand pounds to the artist who painted his portrait ; and with this sum added to the well-earned reward of her daily labours, Anna contrived not only to maintain a respectable and genteel appearance, but often to comfort the distressed, and supply the wants of the needy.

Gentle reader, forgive the writer of this story, that she has no better fate in store for her heroine, even in the season of "the first grey hair," than that of a respected and respectable old maid ; not a fretful, fuming thing, of false ringlets, and false smiles, but a woman of delicate and tender feeling, of calm dignity, and unbounded benevolence, who mourned no longer that earth afforded her no object, or rather no idol, on which she might lavish the warm feelings of an affectionate heart ; for she had learned to pour

forth into a thousand channels, "that charity, which suffereth long and is kind."

Alas ! to the rescue of Anna Clare, from the shades of vulgar oblivion, there came no belted knight, no steel-clad warrior ; no prince in disguise discovered her to be the alien daughter of his house ; nor did a superannuated nabob make her the heiress of an Indian fortune ; but she continued to dwell in the home of her friend,

" Happy and giving happiness ;"

and though highly gifted with those qualities, which might reasonably attract the attention of the wealthy and the noble, she never ventured beyond her own lowly sphere, but was content to remain, where she had not only the wish, but the power to bless. That enthusiasm which had given wayward wings to her inexperienced fancy, became tempered by religion, into energy and hope ; energy, that shrank not from the humblest, as well as the most arduous duties ; and hope that burned brighter and brighter, to the close of a useful and well-spent life. Nor were the tastes and the enjoyments of her early years extinguished, but properly directed and restrained ; for Anna Clare could still wander forth on dewy evenings, even when her cheek had lost its bloom ; but her wanderings now more frequently terminated in errands of kindness to her humble friends, and though she could still look around her with delight in the charms of nature, the world was no longer a mere picture, admired only for



## ELLEN ESKDALE.

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GONE from her cheek, is the summer bloom,  
And her breath has lost its faint perfume,  
And the gloss has dropp'd from her golden hair,  
And her cheek is pale but no longer fair.

And the spirit that sate on her soft blue eye,  
Is struck with cold mortality ;  
And the smile that play'd on her lip has fled,  
And every charm hath now left the dead.

Like slaves they obey'd her in height of power,  
But left her all in her wintry hour ;  
And the crowds that swore for her love to die,  
Shrunk from the tone of her last faint sigh,  
And this is man's fidelity !

BARRY CORNWALL.

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## ELLEN ESKDALE.

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### CHAPTER I.

WILL my young friends forgive me, if, under the character of a fictitious story, I should in reality preach them a sermon ; and that on the gravest of all possible subjects — on the subject of death ?

We learn, from an immense number of the publications of the present day, how the righteous pass away from works to rewards ; and, from the public papers, how the murderer and the malefactor expire on the scaffold ; but there is an extent of intermediate space filled up by those of whose fate we know comparatively nothing ; those ~~who~~ act, unheeded, their little part upon the stage of life, then die, and are forgotten.

It is from this class of beings that I have selected the individual who is to furnish to the attentive reader food for serious reflection during the perusal of a few dull pages, in order that we may lift the veil by which the moral secrets of the fashionable and

well bred may be concealed from vulgar observation, and see for once how an amiable and very beautiful young lady may die.

There lived, in a certain large city, a family of the name of Eskdale, consisting of a highly respectable gentleman, his lady, and three daughters. To describe them individually would be a waste of words and patience, they were so much like half the people one meets and visits with. One thing, however, ought to be remarked about this family, though by no means peculiar to them, that, while living in a populous city, where the loud death-bell was often heard to toll, and where as often a solemn funeral was seen to pass along the streets; yet, for themselves, they never thought of death. It is true they had been made acquainted with some instances of fatality within their own sphere of observation; for once their white muslin dresses came home from the washerwoman's uncrimped, because, as she said, her youngest daughter then lay a corpse in the house; and their old footman, Thomas Bell, died in the workhouse the day before the five shillings which they sent him reached his necessities. And, in high life, too, had they not known it? Had they not all worn fashionable mourning for their most revered monarch, King George the Third? And had they not lost a maiden aunt? And were not the fountains of their grief staid by a legacy of six thousand pounds? Yes,—they remembered all these *things*, and yet they looked upon death only as a

frightful and far-off monster, who might never come to them ; so they lighted up their drawing-room, and let down the rich damask curtains, and drew in the card-tables, and never thought of death. Perhaps one reason might be, they had never known sickness. It is true the mother sometimes presented, at the breakfast table, a countenance pale and cloudy as a morning in November, but the evening party always found her adorned with ready smiles, and new made blushes ;—smiles that betrayed no meaning, and blushes that told no tale but one.

Ellen Eskdale, the youngest of the three fair sisters, was, at this time, making her first appearance in the fashionable world. She had grown prodigiously during her last year at school, and now, though a little in danger of becoming too stout, was as lovely a young creature, both in form and face, as you could well behold.

“A little in danger of growing too stout,” has a very serious sound to a young lady, and yet it was much whispered among Ellen’s friends, that, in a few years, she would be monstrous. The gentlemen thought otherwise, and swore it was all envy, for they could not see a fault in Ellen Eskdale, and perhaps she did not see many in herself ; for she had ears to hear all that love and flattery could offer, and eyes to see, when gazing in the tall mirror, that love had hardly been too partial, or flattery too profuse. Though trained, and pushed, and bribed forward, in all the accomplishments of the age, Ellen’s chief

excellence was in music; and never did she look more beautiful than when her light and ivory fingers touched the harp; for then a rich mass of sunny hair fell over her cheek and forehead, often thrown back with girlish carelessness, when she forgot herself in any of her favourite airs. She had been well taught, and her parents had paid dearly for the loss of a fine girl, and the substitution of a fine lady; but yet she was not wholly refined from the dross of nature; for her wild and merry laugh was sometimes heard resounding through the rooms, to the dismay of her mother, and the astonishment of her guests; as the bird, that has been taught to sing in measured notes, will sometimes return to his own sweet melody, telling of woods, and streams, and mountains, and breathing forth the inward yearnings of that spirit, which it is impossible for art to subdue.

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## CHAPTER II.

COULD the bright eye, the blooming cheek, or the polished forehead—could all, or any of the attributes of beauty, support us in the hour of trial, or cheer us on the bed of sickness, they would then be worth cherishing, and mourning for ; but there must be something else, my young friends, to render the pilgrimage of life a path of pleasantness and peace. Rich as you may be, the grave has closed over the possessor of greater wealth than yours. Fair as you may be, the worm has fed upon a cheek as lovely. Young as you may be, death has laid his icy hand upon those who had not numbered half your years. But, as this is not the style of preaching which I have the talent, or you the patience to pursue, we will, if you please, return again to the family of the Eskdales ; not as we first beheld them, but after a summer had passed away ; and the assemblies, the concerts, the plays, and the parties of another winter had commenced.

Ellen was still the centre of attraction, and still

she was not wholly sophisticated, but would sometimes look, and speak, as if at the bottom of her heart there were left some latent feeling, that struggled to be free from the yoke of fashion — that rose in fruitless efforts to assert itself no longer the slave, but the minister of pleasure.

These ebullitions of feeling, however, came like angel visits ; and, when they did come, they were so faint, so ill-defined, and generally so mixed up with various and contending emotions, that no one knew from whence they flowed, whether from heaven, or earth ; no—not even the fair possessor herself ; only the ladies wondered at those times how so young a girl could venture to talk sentiment ; still more, how she could make it answer, when they had so long talked it in vain ; and, at the same time, the gentlemen would begin to doubt whether they might not do worse than make serious proposals to Ellen Eskdale.

Miss Eskdale, the oldest sister, had been striving, for the last five years, to attain that footing in society, which had been awarded to Ellen, apparently, without any effort of her own. In loveliness, her own face would not stand the test of a comparison with her sister's ; and in accomplishments, she was far behind her ; so taking to herself another standing, or rather, hanging her orb in another sphere, she determined that their rays should never intercept each other, and, having failed to be a beauty, Miss Eskdale *became a blue* ; and corresponded with (at least wrote



to) great authors, and patronized poor ones, and held in her charmed possession the first manuscript copies of half the bright effusions that annually come forth, to delight or disappoint the expectant winter circle.

Of the second sister, it could not well be said that she had ever been guilty of any aim at all, and, therefore, feeling no loss in her sister's gain, she would often kindly, and almost affectionately, fall in with her wild fancies, when Ellen's exuberance of spirits exacted from others a somewhat unreasonable submission to her own whims and follies ; for Ellen was not merely a beauty, she possessed a ready invention, and versatility of talent, which, added to her natural good-humour, and buoyancy of mind, gave an air of freshness and originality to whatever she said or did. Her path was not the beaten track of custom : she delighted in eccentricities, and charmed her mother's guests by a thousand schemes for their entertainment, which they had never heard of before ; taking this precaution, in every thing she introduced, that her own should be a brilliant and striking part. In case of a failure, she never sat down with an air of despondency, but immediately took up some other plan to cover her defeat, so that the company were sure to go away well satisfied at last.

In this manner the gay evening parties came and went ; and who was happier than Ellen Eskdale ?

Of all the young gentlemen who flocked to her father's house, there was none more constant in his

visits, more attractive in his person, or more pointed in his attentions, than Harry Wentworth, a young man of enviable fortune, just whiling away the winter months, before commencing his travels on the Continent.

It was, for a long time, matter of doubt with the two elder sisters, which of the three could possibly be the object of attraction, but the whole secret had been revealed to Ellen during a long moonlight walk by the side of the river, late in the autumn, when a party of pleasure had been formed to visit the ruins of a castle, situated some miles up the stream. Ellen had always been afraid of water, and Wentworth was happy to be her escort on the shore. The dew was falling heavily, the grass was thick and long, and Ellen found a more dangerous enemy than she had feared; for she dated from this night the commencement of a quick and frequent cough, which was, at times, exceedingly troublesome. But it was surprising how little she thought or cared about the cough; for, on this night, her lover had declared himself, and though she had insisted that nothing should be said on the subject, as she was quite too young to think seriously of such a thing, she had kindly promised that she would try to think of it; and there is every reason to believe that it did really occur to her thoughts almost as often as her lover himself could desire. There was such unspeakable satisfaction in knowing that the very man, whom her sisters were trying every art to fascinate, was secretly

and surely devoted to her. He was so handsome too — so gay — so fearless — so playful in his disposition — and in every thing so much like herself — Oh ! it was worth all the world to hear the whispers of Harry Wentworth, when he tried, amongst the crowd, to catch her attention for a moment, while she would pass on with affected carelessness, not unfrequently returning to assure herself of the reality.

### THE SPIRIT OF JOY ;

DAUGHTER of sorrow, weeping and sad,  
Cast the dark weeds from thy brow ;  
Come with the spirit of joy and be glad,  
Come from the fountains of woe.

I'll bear thee away on a sunbeam so bright,  
I'll deck thee with flowers so gay,  
I'll bathe thee in oceans of liquid light,  
And chase all thy tears away.

For I come from the mountain, the heath, and the dell,  
I come with the hunter's wild horn,  
I have bid the grim deserts of darkness farewell,  
And I dance on the clouds of the morn.

I live in the sunshine of summer's bright hours,  
I sport on the butterfly's wing,  
All mine are the treasures of April's glad showers,  
And mine the rich odours of spring.

I spurn at the temple, the tower, and the dome,  
I laugh at the labours of man ;  
Far, far, in the blue sunny sky is my home,  
And my realm is the rainbow's wide span !

These words, with an exquisite accompaniment, Ellen had been singing to a crowded audience, with so much spirit and animation, that she seemed herself to personify the ideal being of whom she sang. Before her light fingers touched the harp, she had cleared her white forehead and sparkling eyes from the shadow of rich curls that veiled, without concealing, her beauty ; and now the colour of her cheek was deepened by a blush of varying emotions, in which were mingled and combined some of the most powerful feelings that are wont to agitate the breast of woman ; the shame of attracting every eye, the triumph of conscious power, and, mightiest and most prevailing, the wild fervour of the enthusiast.

It was a habit, some people said, a trick of Ellen's, as soon as her performance was ended, to divert the earnest attention of the company by some playful sally, quite irrelevant to the subject, or else to escape at once into obscurity ; and, on this occasion, as on many former ones, she succeeded in finding a vacant seat beside Harry Wentworth, who seldom joined the herd of admirers, to worship the star of the multitude, but delighted to see that star direct its partial rays to him.

## CHAPTER III.

"WHAT is all this harangue about?" said she to her lover, after they had listened, for a few moments, to a little party of grave personages, gathered round Miss Eskdale.

"Your sister," replied he, "is edifying her friends on the subject of suicide; she is telling them the nature of different poisons, and what is the readiest mode of quitting the world."

"Oh! that does not concern me," said Ellen, "for I shall never be tired of living; shall you, Harry?"

"Not if you will promise to live with me."

"Now, tell me the truth for once," said she, looking up into his face, — "the truth, and nothing but the truth; for, mind you, I have a charm by which I know a falsehood, and you have told me a great many of late; tell me then, truly, whether you could live without me?"

Wentworth paused for a moment, and then coolly answered — "I think I could."

Ellen had been gazing on his face with the sweet confidence of a child, and, perhaps, it was the steady look of her clear and cloudless eyes which, somehow or other, had impelled him, almost unconsciously, to speak what she had demanded, the whole truth; which he did at once, boldly, and thought no more about it; but, had he been a nice observer of woman's character, he would have seen that the ready smile of expectation had passed away from Ellen's lips, — that the blush had faded from her cheek, — and that, though she instantly took up a new print, and began to expatiate upon its beauties with rapturous enthusiasm, she bent down her head lower than was necessary, that her thick falling ringlets might conceal her altered countenance, while she wiped from her eye the first tear that Harry Wentworth had ever made her shed.

It might be that he did not know the degree of feeling of which Ellen was capable; or that, in his own heart there was no such deep and hidden fountain; for he never dreamed that he had given pain, and would almost rather have wept himself, than that eyes so beautiful should have been dimmed with tears. It was, however, but a light and passing cloud, and those eyes again beamed forth in all their wonted brightness; music and dancing drowned the evening in noise and confusion, and all was sunshine and glad summer beneath the roof of Mr. Eskdale, in spite of the wintry blast that howled without.

“What can be the matter with Ellen Eskdale?”



said a lady to her companion, one evening, as they returned home from the play?"

"Oh, in love, to be sure," was the reply; for her companion was a gentleman.

"She need not pine away for that," said the lady, "for Wentworth seems as much in love as she does. She must be ill; that cold of hers lasts so long. Did you not observe, the other day, at Mrs. Beverley's, how she leaned upon the harp, and how dreadfully worn-out she looked, after the first dance?"

"As for the leaning upon the harp," replied he of the charitable sex, "it was to show off her figure; and young ladies always look languid, when they can, to excite interest."

"Well, continued, the lady, these beauties never last. I wish poor Mrs. Eskdale may not lose her daughter yet."

It was true enough: Ellen was now often so weary that she could hardly walk up stairs, when the family retired to rest; and in the morning there was a cold glassy look about her eyes, that might well have startled the fears of a more anxious and experienced parent; and her mother did at last begin to think something must be the matter; for Ellen could not sing as she was wont; the highest tones of her voice were almost entirely gone, and she seldom got through a piece of music without a violent fit of coughing.

"Poor girl! She has quite outgrown her strength," said the mother; "she must have tonics." So Ellen tried tonics, and her cough was worse than ever; but

it was not before she was obliged to give up dancing too, that the family had recourse to medical advice.

"A slight pulmonary affection," said the doctor; and he rubbed his hands, for he saw before him a good winter's work.

Some persons, on looking back, would have been alarmed to see how much had been given up during the last few weeks; but Ellen only laughed, and told Wentworth she was growing quite a saint; and that, after Christmas, she would put on a plain cap, and go and sit with sister Cartwright, at her class-meetings.

All could have been borne; her bad nights, her cough, her weakness,—and all borne cheerfully, but now the ill-natured old doctor forbade her going out, except in the middle of the day, and when the weather was mildest. Her evenings must be spent at home, quietly, and without any excitement. If the family would stay with her, and Harry Wentworth, and two or three others would come, it might be endured; but sometimes she was left entirely alone; and, worst of all, had run through the last volume of the last novel before they returned. On Sunday, however, she had them all safely enough, and Wentworth too, and a merry evening they managed to pass together; for they had everybody to describe, and to mimic; and when Ellen had their follies second-hand, it was almost as entertaining, as if she had seen them herself. But even these amusements began to pall upon her; and sometimes, when they looked round for her ready

laugh, she had turned away her face, and was quite unable to laugh at all.

Oh, the emptiness of folly, when mortal sickness falls upon the heart!

It was at the close of one of these sabbath evenings, when her sister and Wentworth had been unusually animated, that Ellen suddenly burst into tears, and left the room.

"What is the matter with that silly girl?" said Miss Eskdale; "she grows so fretful, there is no such thing as pleasing her."

"No," said her sister Mary, "you should not say so; Ellen was never fretful, but her spirits are so weak now, that the least thing overpowers her," and so saying, Mary followed her up stairs.

It was well that she did; for the poor girl, having at last given full vent to her feelings, in a violent fit of hysterics, the rupture of a blood-vessel was the natural and fearful consequence.

From this time, Ellen never spent the night alone; Marston, a middle-aged woman, who had been in the family for many years, had a bed placed beside her, and she was reduced to the necessity of being in all respects an invalid.

Still there seemed to be no immediate danger. It was a case which needed care and quiet. Marston was an excellent nurse, and the kindest creature in the world; so there was no need to sit much with Ellen, especially as the dear girl was not allowed to converse; and thus she was left hour after hour, to

in solitude; for those who were nearest and dearest to her, knew not that love that will steal into the darkened chamber, and watch by the bed-side of a beloved object, not only enduring, but choosing that faithful vigil, before all the pleasures of the world — that soul-felt and expressive stillness, when affection, like the evening dew, sheds her silent influence on the drooping soul.

There was no immediate danger : — Ellen's excellent constitution rallied again, and she was able, once more, with the help of Marston, to pace slowly to and fro in her room, casting many a wistful glance at the dull window, that looked out upon a square of formal garden, where the shrubs were matted up, and here and there a wasted drift of dirty snow told of a chilly and humid atmosphere, with all its melancholy accompaniments. Ellen gazed, and gazed, till she was wearied out; and then she turned within, and opened her box of trinkets, which had pleased her so often; but now they failed in producing any other effect than a slight touch of pain—it might be a faint apprehension that what had been would never be again, which had well nigh brought the tears into her eyes; so she asked Marston for her music, but music, without either voice or instrument, is the dullest thing in the world, and this failed her too. What could she do? Swallow her sleeping draught two hours before the time, and beg of Marston to assist her into bed, for she was weary of herself and every thing beside.

*In a few days, however, Ellen had so far recovered*

as to regain the wonted tone of her mind, and with this transient and delusive convalescence, came busy thoughts of that world in which she had been so bright a star — that ungrateful world, that never missed nor mourned her waning light.

As soon as her strength would permit, she amused herself with looking through her wardrobe. One by one, her rich dresses were unfolded ; the dressmaker was called in, to alter them to her present shape ; and ah ! it was like a mockery of the grave, to see her tall thin figure, decked out in the vestments of fashion, and folly, and to hear her difficult and laborious breathings, and the short quick cough that perpetually interrupted her directions, as she told how the trimmings, the fullness, and the folds, were to be so placed, as to conceal the alteration in her wasted person.

Oh ! it needs religion to wean us from the things of earth !



## CHAPTER IV.

THERE is nothing like a return to the domestic scenes, and pursuits of a family, for giving spirits to an invalid ; and Ellen, when released from the prison of her own room, really fancied she was gaining strength. With her returning spirits, the hopes of the family returned, and with their hopes, the longing to be again in the world, just to tell Lady B. that dear Ellen was recovering ; and then the party at Sir Robert Long's, could they refuse that, now that Pa and Sir Robert had had a difference about their game ; it would look as if the ladies of the family wished to keep it up — no, they must go, and not one of them only, but all. Marston would sit with Ellen ; so they dressed themselves, and kissed her very kindly, and left her ; and she sat for a long time listening to the sound of the carriages, as they rolled along the street, each conveying its rich freight to the door of the wealthy Baronet.

It so happened, on that day, that Wentworth had *not* been invited, and hearing that his mistress was



again visible, and having nothing else to do, he went and knocked at that busy door, that was for ever turning on its hinges. Oh, how well did Ellen know his step, as he lightly skipped up the stairs ! she tried to meet him at the door of the drawing room : but her breath failed her, and she could only look a welcome kinder than words.

When her lover first beheld her, he started back ; for there is a disease which makes rapid inroads upon beauty, in the course of a few days, without the sufferer being aware of any change ; but he soon recovered himself, and began to apologize for his long absence, by a thousand excuses, which Ellen often interrupted by her exclamations of pleasure, that he had come at last, and so opportunely.

“ I began to think that you would never come again, it is so long since you have been here. Oh, I am so glad to see you, it is so dull shut up here alone, when they all leave me ; but come, sit down, and be as happy as you can, and tell me all that you have seen and heard since we last met ; but do not make me laugh, for I have a wretched feeling here,” (laying her hand upon her breast,) “ and laughing hurts me worse than anything ;” so they sat down together, and fixed their eyes upon the fire, and were both silent for a long time.

“ Did you ever see any one in a consumption ?” was the first question which Ellen asked ; and her lover started, for he had been thinking of the very same thing.

“ No, I never did, and hope I never shall ; your illness is not consumption, dear Ellen ; it is not, it shall not be.”

“ Then what can be the meaning of all this fever ; and why cannot I get rid of this horrid cough ; I strive against it, indeed I do ; and sometimes I think it is all fancy, I feel so well ; but oh ! Harry Wentworth, if it should be !” And she fixed her eyes upon him, with such an expression of wild and convulsive agony, that he almost shrank away.

Wentworth was not entirely a stranger to the thought of death, but he had only thought of dying as a man, or a soldier, in the cause of honour, or on the field of battle : the certain symptoms of a lingering and fatal malady had never before been present to his observation ; and now, when he looked upon the being he had regarded as least mortal, and met the glaring of the hollow eye, and saw the falling away of the fair cheek, the wasting of the once rounded lips, and felt the earnest pressure of the thin and feverish hand, his spirits failed within him ; for it was beyond what his imagination had ever pictured, what his fortitude was able to endure, and he felt that he had no consolation to offer in such an hour as this.

It is true he loved her—but how ? Not as a fellow-pilgrim through a vale of tears, journeying on towards a better land :—not as a creature of high hopes and capabilities, whose talents are to be matured, and whose good feelings strengthened into principle. He loved *her as man too often loves woman*, for the sake of

her bright eyes, her shining hair, and the symmetry of a graceful and elastic figure. He loved her as a fair and charmed creature, who was to be exclusively his own — to minister to his gratification, to soothe him when weary, and to supply fresh stimulus to his tastes, when sated with fruition. How then should he find consolation for such an hour as this ! He could only fold to his bosom this frail and fading beauty — kiss off the falling tears — and tell her, that she would not, could not die.

Oh ! it needs religion to reconcile us to the thought of death !

After this distressing interview, Wentworth had no disposition to come again ; and, if he had, it would probably have been in vain, for the poor invalid was very soon confined to her own room, and strictly forbid to see any one, except her own family, who now were all sufficiently concerned at the sad change, and would probably have made any sacrifice of their wonted amusements to save her.

Mrs. Eskdale was by no means an unfeeling woman, though her fears had been late in taking alarm ; but now she felt, in its full force, how much dearer to her was the life of her child, than all her wealth, her rich furniture, and her fashionable guests.

But what could she do ? The ablest physicians were consulted, and there was no hope ; — her child must die ! Regardless of the wonted placidity of her countenance, she wandered from one stately room to another, by habit adjusting all the little or-

naments which had been misplaced, without knowing what she did ; and often both she and her daughters stole, on tiptoe, into the sick-room, asking the inexhaustible question, did Ellen want anything ; but never staying long beside her, for the stillness was intolerable to them, and they knew not what to say, — Marston was an excellent nurse, and Ellen wanted nothing. Poor *child* ! she wanted that best of friends, a friend who will kindly and candidly tell her the truth ; for though she knew that she was daily giving up one thing after another, and gradually losing ground, such is the deceitful nature of this disease, that she did not feel at all certain it would terminate in death. Her physician was the only person who thought of revealing the awful truth, and a consultation was held on the subject, to consider whether it should be done, and how.

“ It may be right,” said one, “ but I could not tell her for the world ;” and another, and another, excused herself, until, at last, the lot fell upon the physician, a man who had neither wife nor child, nor knew any thing of the sensibilities of woman’s heart ; so he took up his cane, and went straight into the sick-room, and sat down by the bed-side.

“ It has been thought right, ma’am,” said he, and he cleared his voice ; “ it has been thought right, by your family, to depute me to be the bearer of unwelcome information ;” and he paused again, for *Ellen* turned away her head. “ I doubt not, ma’am, *you understand my meaning ; — all has been done*



that medical skill affords, but there are diseases which baffle the art of the physician ; something, however, may yet be done to alleviate suffering ; and allow me to assure you, ma'am, that nothing shall be omitted on my part.

Ellen gave no sign of intelligence, either by word or motion. She had by this time buried her face in the pillow, so that, if he had said more, she would not have heard it ; and the physician, with the satisfaction of having discharged his duty, rose, and gravely and quietly took his leave.

Indeed, every one in the house seemed to think they were doing their duty. Pills were compounded, physicians were fee'd, parties were given up, bells were muffled, and knockers wrapped in leather, — what more could they do ? Nurses were hired, receipts were borrowed, and fruits of every description were purchased at any cost, — they could do nothing more ! and still the poor girl lay stretched upon her uneasy bed, her face turned towards the pillow to hide the profuse perspiration that stood in pearly drops upon her forehead, and the still more copious flow of burning tears, which gave some evidence to the beholder of the uncontrollable agony within.

They could, indeed, do nothing more ; for death had set his seal upon that beautiful form, and she was sinking into the fathomless depths of eternity — passing away, in the pride and the promise of her youth, from all its glory, and from all its exquisite

enjoyments; while those who had cherished her infancy, and exulted in her ripened years; who knew that they were rearing an immortal fabric to stand for ever, a witness of their faithfulness or their neglect, looked upon their miserable child, and wrung their helpless hands, and mingled their melancholy wailings with hers; but no one pointed out a ray of hope, or spoke one word of comfort, or even thought of the blessed Saviour, who walked upon the troubled waters in the majesty of his benignant love. Trembling, fearful, hopeless, she was about to be pushed off from the frail bark of mortality; and where now were all the energies of that strong and buoyant heart? Hope, that burns brightest in the youthful bosom — hope, that too often deceives us in the intricate wilderness of life, but is ever ready to stand forth in undeniable reality on the brink of the grave — where was Ellen's hope? Weeping over the ruins of her own "fantastic realm," and faith, her sober sister, came not in that hour of need, — and why? because she had been sought only to give stability to idle professions, and vain promises, and giddy smiles, and had never been solicited to preside over her own peculiar province, the life, the duties, and the death-bed of the Christian.

The medicine, which was sent that afternoon, soothed the patient into a long slumber, from which she awoke considerably refreshed, and sat up, as usual, during part of the evening; indeed she felt so well as almost to question the doctor's infallibility,



and could not help asking Marston if she thought there was really no hope.

"Oh! yes ma'am, a great deal of hope when the warm weather comes.

"Warm weather! how you talk woman! it is now the depth of winter, and the spring cannot come for months yet; but oh! I dare not think about the spring; and she fell into a long fit of childish weeping, partly the effect of the opiate she had taken. "Marston," said she, as soon as she regained some degree of self-command, "I wish you would tell Mr. Wentworth what the doctor thinks; but stay, give me paper, I will write;—no, I cannot guide the pen; do steal out, and ask to see him yourself, and tell him he must come once again. I will send for him when I am at the best, for I would not for the world distress him, poor fellow." So, one evening, when she felt able to bear it, he was sent for and came with Marston into the room where Ellen lay, stretched out upon a sofa, which had been placed beside the fire for her accommodation, when weary of her bed.

Poor girl! she had felt strong enough before her lover came, but now, when he walked silently up to her, and affectionately took her hand,—but most of all, when she heard again the well-remembered tones of his rich and manly voice, it seemed as if the ties that bound her to the world were drawn about her with fresh power, and, in that moment, she tasted the full bitterness of death.

Wentworth asked a few kind questions, and that was all, for he had not a single word of comfort to offer, and there was a choking in his throat, which almost forbade him to say anything.

Ellen all the while lay still and motionless; she did not raise her eyes, nor speak one word; yet the lids were not so closely shut, but that one big tear after another stole from beneath the long silken lashes, and wandered unheeded down her hollow cheek, where a single bright spot of burning crimson told its fearful tale.

It is impossible to say how long this painful silence might have lasted, had not the door opened, and Marston beckoned Wentworth out.

"You will be so good as to remember, Sir," said she, "that I have strict orders not to admit any one, I should, therefore, thank you to leave us as soon as possible."

When Wentworth returned, he gently took up Ellen's long, thin hand, that lay stretched out as pure, and almost as lifeless, as marble, and said, in a quiet voice, that he feared it was time for him to leave her. Then, and not till then, she raised her eyes, and looked full into his face.

There is an expression in the eye that is lighted up by the fever of consumption, which those who have not seen it never can imagine, and which those who have seen it never can forget. It was in vain that the poor sufferer struggled to speak. Her lips quivered, but she had no words to express the

anguish of her soul. Wentworth stooped down, that his ear might catch the sound, if there were any, and with the hand that was disengaged, she raised from his brow the thick curls of raven hair, and then gently circling his neck with her slender arm, drew him still nearer, and pressed upon his forehead her farewell kiss; saying, at the same time, in a low whisper, "It is the last!"

And this was all; and he, who had so loved her in this world, parted with her on the brink of another; left her at the gates of death, without one word about eternity to cheer her on her awful way.

Here let us draw a veil over the closing scene. He to whom time has no limits — to whom opportunity gives no advantage — to whom all things are possible, is, doubtless, able to carry on his own work of preparation in the soul, even when the sufferer dies and makes no sign.

It is the task of the writer to describe, as well as feeble powers are able to describe, the external evidence of that struggle, which must naturally attend the dissolution of the earthly tenement, to those who have not ensured a place in any higher habitation.

The heart alone knoweth its own bitterness, and the heart alone beareth witness, with anguish unutterable, to that which is in reality the sting of death—the victory of the grave.

## CHAPTER V.

IN a few days the public papers announced the death of Ellen, youngest daughter of Charles Eskdale, Esq., and all the ceremony of preparation for the deepest grief went on in the still busy family.

On the sixth day after this melancholy event, Wentworth found himself, to his great surprise, still thinking of Ellen. It was true and faithful, and looked well not to forget her; but to bear about with him continually the remembrance of her loveliness, and his own loss, was a weakness of which he had not conceived himself capable; so he filled another bumper of champaign, and determined to be wiser. He had that day dined alone at his own table, and now sat gazing, without a wish, at the rich dessert that was spread before him—not only without a wish, but without a definite idea, for he drank deeply, with a determination to drown reflection, and now the lights were dancing before him with a dizzy glare, and half-imagined images flitted by, in quick succession, amongst which the pale and lifeless form

of Ellen returned too often, until at last, by one of those unaccountable operations of the human mind, by which we sometimes feel impelled to do that which is most revolting to our feelings, he started from his seat, and determined that he would go and look upon the dead body. This resolution, once formed, was soon acted upon, for he had neither power nor patience to think, and in a few minutes he entered the hall of Mr. Eskdale, and called for Marston.

She came, and neither of them spoke, for Wentworth pointed to the stairs, and the woman, taking up a tall candle, walked silently before him, until they stopped at the door of what was once Ellen's chamber. The door was locked, and Marston tried to turn the key without making any noise, as if afraid to wake the slumberer within. They entered — four wax candles, that stood burning night and day, two at each end of the coffin, gave a pale and solemn light to the chilly aspect of the room. Over the coffin there had been carefully drawn a cover of white muslin, which Marston slowly folded down as soon as Wentworth drew near; and he stood gazing on the lifeless figure, with the bewildered astonishment of one who has but a partial apprehension of some great and awful calamity.

The soft tresses of silky hair that were wont to wave and glitter in the light, agitated by the quick and playful movements of her who was so proud to wear them, were now combed out and laid in bands upon the forehead, as smooth and close as if no



breath or motion had ever stirred them. The eyes, from which the very soul of merriment had once beamed forth, were now for ever folded under their snowy lids, and the long lashes fell with a deep shadow on the cheek — the hollow cheek, for which health, and youth, and beauty had once contended, as for a treasure that was peculiarly their own — and then the mouth — where now was the exquisite play of the lips, that would puzzle the beholder with such rapid expression of mingled emotions — of pride — of laughter — of contempt — until all were lost in a smile, so beaming with the best affections of the soul, that those who felt its sweetness were apt to forget every thing beside? Those lips were now drawn out into long purple lines, between which the white teeth were visible, and the chin, and the nose, too, had become so pointed and prominent, that those who had well known Ellen Eskdale might now have looked upon, without recognizing, her face. And yet, in spite of all these fearful changes, there was beauty still — that beauty which every heart can feel, but which no words can describe — the beauty of eternal stillness — the beauty of death!

Wentworth gazed, and gazed, and neither he nor his companion spoke one word, until at last he lifted his rosy fingers, warm with the circling blood of life, and touched the cheek! The chill of horror that instantly ran through his veins, brought back his scattered senses, to suffer with redoubled intensity of feeling. He had pictured to himself, before he came,



the eye, the lips, the forehead, the whole countenance; but the solid marble feeling, the cold resistance of that cheek, whose yielding softness he had known so well, was what no one had ever described to him, what he had never dreamed of.

That chilling touch had, in one instant, dispersed all his imaginary fortitude, and he stood beside the coffin, pale as its own lifeless occupant; weak, and trembling as a child. At length, with uncertain steps, he gained the door; and though Marston tried to make him understand that the funeral would take place on the following day, he neither heard nor tried to hear, but hurried down the stairs, and through the hall, without any other member of the household knowing he had been there.

How dark and dreary was that long night to Harry Wentworth. Sleep came not to draw her misty curtain between him and the distressing realities of life—the still more terrible realities of death. If for one moment he closed his eyes in forgetfulness, the next they were wide open, vainly endeavouring to pierce into the abyss of darkness; and whenever he turned his face towards the vacant pillow, his distempered imagination presented a long white figure, stretched beside him, with Ellen's eyes, just as he had seen them in their last interview, fixed full upon his countenance, while every time his hand touched the cold bed-clothes, the remembrance of that icy cheek came back to him, bringing its own deathly chillness to his bursting heart.

How was the strong man brought low, and his boasted power subdued, beneath the mastery of ungovernable feeling. It was not altogether fear that held him in subjection — still less was it sorrow—but a terrible warfare of all that can agitate the soul, heightened, it may be at times, (for who can fathom the depths of the human heart) by a fearful looking-for of judgment.

At five o'clock on the following morning, the household of Harry Wentworth were alarmed by the ringing of their master's bell.

"It must be as I thought," said the old housekeeper, "he is breaking his heart for that dear young lady,"—and recollecting the efficacy of hartshorn in many former cases, when her own heart was broken, and well knowing that neither her master nor John would be able to find the nostrum, she took up the light, kept always burning in her room, and proceeded to the landing of the stairs, where she could distinctly hear the conversation which took place between the master and his man.

"Sir," said John, "the roan has never eaten a handful of corn since the trotting match on Weston common."

"Then take Ronald : I don't care which, only mind you are there in time to let him breathe before we start. The hounds meet at Bexley. I shall breakfast at the Grange, and see that you are ready for me. But stop—give me a light, for this room is darker than ——"

"Break his heart!" said the housekeeper, and she turned again into her own chamber, where she was soon asleep in her own bed.

It was a noble and heart-stirring sight to those who care for such things, to see young Wentworth that day on his black hunter—a furious and high-mettled animal, that few could manage: but it was the pride of his rider that he could manage any thing—could bring any thing into subjection. He forgot that little field of action, his own heart, and those eternal enemies, his own wild passions, and his own stubborn will. In fact he forgot every thing for a few hours at least, for the frost was all gone—the scent lay well—the ground was in the best possible condition, and Ronald outdid himself, to say nothing of the merits of the poor fox, who died like a Briton.

There was excitement in the chase that day, enough to wean a heart like Wentworth's from every thought of sorrow; and if sometimes the image of his lost treasure would present itself unbidden, it only served as a stimulus to fresh action—to urge his horse to a more desperate leap.

Thus passed those hours of boisterous hilarity, and forgetfulness of care. But moments of enjoyment must have a crisis, and mornings of felicity an afternoon.

Wentworth staid long upon the field, for there were the different properties of different animals to discuss; bets to decide, and a world of business to be gone through; so that when he turned his horse's head to

the road leading towards the city, the darkness and haze of a dull afternoon, in the early part of February, was already beginning to render distant objects misty and undefined.

It so happened, that all the gentlemen whose destination was the same, had preceded him by some hours, so that he was left to pursue his solitary way, and ruminate in silence on the dregs of excitement; the most unsatisfactory aliment in the world. Gaily whistling up his spirits, he began, for want of better amusement, to think of some familiar air, by which he might beguile the time. "Gentle Zitella," had already passed his lips; but there is a power in sound to call up buried images, beyond what the utmost stretch of imagination can realize; and with that light and playful ditty, came back the vivid remembrance of her who had so often sung it with him; and he saw again the slender fingers, white as the ivory keys they touched, and the sparkle of the sunny eyes, and all the bright and rapid variations of her incomparable charms.

There was no bearing this; — stillness, like that of death, was all around him; and had not his horse, with something of his master's irritability of feeling, started at every fresh object upon the road, and thus with the application of whip and spur, supplied him with continual occupation, it is impossible to say to what height his impatience might have risen. It was too much for mortal man to endure—to be haunted *night and day* as by a spectre, and all this torment



from one who would not willingly have cast a shadow on his path. It became necessary to call up all that was potent and dignified in his nature, for he was not the man to be made a fool of by such idle fantasies; so he discontinued his boyish occupation of lashing off all the young twigs within his reach, and sat bolt upright in his saddle, and felt himself a man and a gentleman.

In this style he was issuing from a bye-lane, which led out by a sudden angle into the great public road, when in an instant, his philosophy and himself had well-nigh been dismounted, by Ronald giving a tremendous start; and Wentworth started too, for by that turn in the road, they had come at once upon the sight and sound of the quick stroke of a spade, upon the fresh earth of a new-made grave, in a little church-yard, that was separated by a high and thin hedge from the public road. The funeral procession was all gone—the clergyman had left the church—the clerk had just locked the door, and was carrying home the keys, and a troop of merry children were enjoying their last gambol amongst the graves, before the sexton should finish his work and turn them out of their favourite play ground.

“That’s a cold lodging,” said Wentworth, as soon as he recovered himself; while he pushed up his horse’s head as near as he could bring it to the part of the hedge, beside where the sexton stood.—“That’s a cold lodging for somebody, my good fellow; for whom are you doing that kind service?”

"Sir," said the man, looking up, and resting one hand upon the spade, while with the other he slowly raised his hat; "who lays here, did you mean, Sir? — It's a Miss Eskdale — there's a monument in that church to old Sir Jonas Eskdale, and the family has buried here ever since his time."

Before the old man had finished speaking, Wentworth was again proceeding slowly on his way, but his head was now bent forward, and strongly, and violently, yet without aim, or object, his hands were clenching the reins of his bridle.

For some time he pursued his way, more like a statue than a living man, when another start of his horse induced him to look up, and he saw that he was falling in with a long line of mourning coaches; and now he could hear the hollow rumbling of the hearse, as it passed under the arch of the ancient gateway, and, when he looked down the first street into the city, its glimmering lights were intercepted at intervals by the nodding of the heavy plumes.

Wentworth would have given much, could he have entered by some other road, for to say nothing of his own internal struggle, he felt, in this rencontre, the want of the decency of external mourning.

In his scarlet coat, he had unwittingly joined the funeral procession, and his sleek and high mettled hunter was proudly rearing and prancing beside the hearse, which had just conveyed Ellen to her grave.

Before he could reach his own door, it was necessary to pass the house of Mr. Eskdale.



He looked up to the windows—the drawing-room was again lighted, and the shadows of female figures flitted to and fro.

Ah! how well could Wentworth picture to his mind the scene within. The blazing fire of a winter's evening—the many lights of paler lustre—the thick folds of damask curtains—the crimson furniture, that gave a glow of warmth and comfort to all around—the soft and flowery carpets, and the rich sofas inviting to luxurious repose. He thought of all these, and then of that little church-yard, where the night was closing in unheeded, and that solitary grave, on which a still and steady rain was falling, unfelt; and then, for the first time, the full conviction took possession of his soul, that Ellen was indeed no more—that through the whole of his after-life he should never gaze upon her face again. There might, and he believed there would, be much to cheer and animate him on his future course, but Ellen would not be near to share it. Creatures as bright and beautiful might minister to his gratification—music might soothe him on his way; but Ellen's harp, and the far sweeter tones of Ellen's voice would be for ever mute.

Wentworth passed on—his heart was not broken—he rushed with fresh ardour into the vortex of dissipation—he drank deeply of the cup of pleasure; but sometimes, before the cup was tasted, there would arise thoughts, that were almost intolerable, of that dismal church-yard, the hearse, the coffin, and the worms.

Oh ! it needs religion to reconcile us even to the earthly part of death.

Of the family of the Eskdales, it is not necessary to say more than that, at the expiration of the usual time for seclusion, they entered the church, in which they maintained a warm and comfortable seat, dressed in a full costume of fashionable mourning ; that many times, during that day's service, the mother's face was shrouded in a white and delicately scented cambric handkerchief ; and that once or twice, when the daughters lifted up their blue eyes, they were seen to be suffused with tears.

## CHAPTER VI.

If any young reader shall have glanced over this picture, in search of highly coloured, or romantic scenery, without any regard to the general design of the painting, disappointment will be the probable issue, accompanied by a want of patience to bear with the author a little longer, while she gives a summary of her meaning, or, in the true style of fable-writing, adds a moral to her tale.

The individual, whose short career has been described in these pages, may serve to represent a vast multitude of sentient and immortal beings, who pass from the cradle to the grave, without once enquiring for what purpose they have been sent to trace their little journey of experience upon this earth — with what provision they have set out upon that journey, and what will be the event of its termination.

The human mind, in its natural state, has, under all circumstances, powers of action and capabilities of enjoyment; and must necessarily be supplied with objects on which these powers may operate, and sources from whence these capabilities may extract pleasure.

How dreadful, then, must be the error of those parents who would forcibly compel their children to walk in the right way, by imposing upon them unnatural restraints ; checking their innocent mirth, and violently uprooting, instead of properly directing, those desires which nature has implanted in their hearts. If this be the straight and narrow path which is recommended to us, no wonder that so few continue to walk therein.

In order that death may be divested of its terrors, it is not necessary that we should render life still more terrible. In order that we may think of the grave without shuddering and horror, it is not necessary that we should make the way that leads to it a howling wilderness ; — in order that we may be willing to die, it is not necessary that we should hate to live.

The bountiful Creator of our being has supplied his creatures with sources of happiness, so various and so multiplied, that the meanest peasant may find them in his daily path, while, to the liberal and enlightened mind, earth, air, and ocean, teem with wonder and delight. How, then, can there be sin in opening the heart to those pleasures which the present state of existence affords. The great and important question is, in what measure, and in what manner we shall enjoy them.

If the body be permitted to gain the ascendancy — if we spend our money, our time, and our energies, in ministering to the gratification of our senses ; *whether* in gross indulgence, or in that which is more

refined and voluptuous, well may we shudder to perceive in that body the symptoms of disease or age ; when we know that it must pass away into a state which offers every thing humiliating and repulsive to the natural feelings. But if, on the other hand, our pleasures and pursuits have been such as to elevate and purify the mind, that mind, being itself immortal, will rejoice at the prospect of that day, when it shall burst the bonds of its prison-house, and leave behind the gross impediments of clay.

But how, asks the young reader, is it possible to attain this state of mental exaltation. My dear young friends, well may you hesitate, before you attempt so difficult an ascent, without the help of religion ; but religion, vulgar, degraded, trampled-upon religion, is able to accomplish all this for you ; and that, without the aid of science or philosophy : and religion has done as much for many, whose portion in this world was, to be despised and rejected of men ; convincing them, by the surest evidence, that the termination of life is not in itself an evil, nor the approach to it a season of dread. That death may be compelled to lay down his hideous sceptre, — to cease to be a king of terrors, and, placing on his brow the diadem of peace, stretch forth his hand, in kindly welcome, to the shores of a long wished-for eternity.

As farther proof how much the body may be made subservient to the mind, we have only to refer to the history of some of the ancient philosophers, who knew not God ; and yet were able to meet death

with calmness and satisfaction, and plunge, without fear, into the abyss of uncertainty. If, then, the case of these wonderful beings, who shone like stars in the distant firmament; beautiful in their own lustre, but dimly disappearing before the glorious sun of day — if the case of these wonderful men supplies us with proof, how much the body may be brought into subjection to the mind; how much of firmness and fortitude may be attained; how much resignation of self and sensual enjoyment may be effected, by a steady and systematic cultivation of the intellectual powers, combined with a contempt for those luxuries and pleasures which afford gratification to the senses alone; what should be the expression of our joy, what the measure of our gratitude to him who has permitted us, in this our day, to add to the negative satisfaction of the stoic, the high hopes, and the glorious privileges which religion alone can offer.

Philosophy may destroy the burden of the body, but religion gives wings to the soul. Philosophy may enable us to look down upon earth with contempt, but religion teaches us to look up to heaven with hope. Philosophy may support us to the brink of the grave, but religion conducts us beyond. Philosophy unfolds a rich store of enjoyment, — religion makes it eternal. Happy is the heart where religion holds her throne, and philosophy, her noble hand-maid, ministers to her exaltation!



## THE CURATE'S WIDOW.

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Oh ! amiable lovely death !—SHAKESPEARE.

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## THE CURATE'S WIDOW.

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### CHAPTER I.

IN order to present the young reader with a contrast to the foregoing picture, it is almost necessary to enter into the humble and limited experience of the true christian, under similar, and even greater trials. Such a picture of private life offers nothing in the way of romantic interest; nothing to excite the passions; nothing to awaken in the soul one spark of poetic feeling; but if it should possess a charm of sufficient power to fix the attention of the reader, to excite a greater love of virtue, or awaken in the soul a spark of religious zeal, the Author will not have to lament that she has written in vain.

“ How shall I build an altar,  
To the Author of my days;  
With lips so prone to falter,  
How shall I sound his praise?

Thy temples were too lowly,  
Oh! great Jerusalem;  
The Lord of hosts too holy,  
Too pure, to dwell in them!

Then how shall I, the weakest,  
His servant hope to be ?  
I 'll listen when thou speakest,  
Spirit of love to me !

I 'll do thy holy bidding,  
With unrepining heart :  
I 'll bear thy gentle chiding,  
For merciful thou art.

I 'll bring each angry feeling,  
A sacrifice to thee ;  
I 'll ask thy heavenly healing,  
Even for mine enemy.

So shall I build an altar,  
To the author of my days ;  
With lips though prone to falter,  
So shall I sound his praise."

Such were the words sung by Alice Bland, as she sat on a low bench at her own door, one beautiful sabbath evening ; and the cheerful cadence was joined by the sweet voice of a little dark-haired boy, whom she pressed closely to her side ; while their eyes met with an expression of such affection, as none but a mother and a child can know. And then they looked away again, over the green fields, far on to the village spire, and traced a little winding path that issued from a group of stately trees, with diligent search, as if for the appearance of some expected object, that was to bring additional enjoyment to their quiet and peaceful pleasures.

"He is coming, he is coming," said the child, and they both ran forward through the garden gate, and down the green lane, where they met a tall, sallow, and exhausted-looking young man, dressed in clerical costume, and wearing the still more imposing solemnity of his sacred office, as one who deeply felt its awful and almost overwhelming responsibility.

Never did plumed warrior, returning from the field of glory, meet a kinder welcome from his lady-love, than that with which Alice Bland greeted her returning lord—lord both of her heart and home. And he too had his full participation of delight, as might be seen in his dark and often melancholy eyes, now lighted up with all the feelings of the husband, and the father, as he stooped to kiss his boy, the very emblem of himself;—he stooped, for he had lately discovered that to lift him from the ground, required an effort almost beyond his strength; especially after so long a walk, a day of such laborious duty, and on a sultry summer's evening: indeed the first greeting was hardly over, before he complained of the oppressive heat of the weather, took off his hat, and wiped his brow, that was pale and wrinkled with exhaustion and fatigue.

Alice placed his arm within hers, and led him gently up the lane, while the boy ran forward and threw open the garden gate, holding it back at the very widest, that his father and mother might pass through without hindrance.

Within the cottage, all was peace and simple com-

fort. Their one domestic was enjoying the liberty of the sabbath amongst her own people, and Alice with her willing hands, had prepared the social tea, with cream, and fruit, and every thing that she thought would be most refreshing to the weary invalid. Little Marcus had gathered a plate of strawberries, of which he felt himself the proud proprietor, and these, with both his hands, he presented to his father, with that deference which his mother had taught him was due to those who were ill; and though his father told him again and again that ladies should be first attended to, the influence of the mother prevailed, and the ill-mannered boy persisted in the error of his ways.

Happy pair! this little point of etiquette was all that Marcus and Alice Bland ever found to contend about; for in duty, as well as in pleasure, their hands and hearts were united.

The social meal was prolonged by pleasant converse, and the frolic of the happy child, until the golden hues of sunset, and the lengthened shadows of the trees gave place to the sober livery of twilight.

Little Marcus had sung his evening hymn, and lisped his evening prayer, and the fond parents had both pressed their farewell kiss upon his cheek, when they sat down together, and in silence, as if listening to a boding voice, which of late had often whispered to their hearts, though neither had trusted their lips with a response. At last the husband spoke, and that melancholy sound seemed to Alice deep and impres-



sive, as the tolling of the bell, to those who watch the motionless body of the dead.

"When I am gone," said Marcus, and he paused ; for he was startled by the convulsive pressure of the hand that was clasped in his, but his wife made no reply, and again he spoke :—

"Alice, my beloved wife, there is an awful sentence pronounced upon us. We have long known it, why should we shrink from acknowledging to each other that we must part. Close, as the connection between soul and body, has been the union of my spirit with thine ; but as it is appointed unto all that they should die, so is it appointed to the dearest that they should part. We are not as those who are sorrowing without hope ; for we know, and believe, and are persuaded, that we shall meet again ; and that in all things excellent, and pure, and holy, we are bound together by ties which death cannot tear asunder. Look up my beloved, and tell me, though this separation must cut us off for ever from earthly hope, tell me that thou hast no repinings, no murmurings against the divine will."

And Alice answered in a firm and steady voice, "I have none ;" and then they pursued the solemn subject, and branched out into its painful realities, with the faith and the confidence of sincere and humble christians. The father spoke tenderly of his child ; and then the mother covered her face with her hands, and wept aloud ; but her tears were tears of womanly feeling, not of despondency or doubt.

## CHAPTER II.

ALICE Bland was a plain and useful character, with few pretensions to gentility; but she possessed that rare and valuable tact, which preserved her from every offence against the laws of good breeding. Her husband was a scholar and a gentleman; but they were both of humble parentage; and had it not been for their unbounded affection for each other, their simple habits, and contentment in their lowly station, they would have found it extremely difficult to exist, upon the slender pittance which the curacy of the neighbouring parish afforded. But Alice was cheerful, active, and domestic, and made the best of every thing, even of herself, though without knowing it; for her appearance, dress, and manners, were as simple and unpretending, as well could be. And then she had such a warm welcome in her very look; indeed some people said it was her comfortable, and care-taking ways, that first won upon the poor invalid; for he was a lodger in her mother's house, long before they married, and Alice used to wait upon him

like a sister, and truly he both deserved and needed it; for he was an orphan left almost destitute, was kind in his disposition, studious in his habits, constitutionally pensive, and pious upon principle.

It was scarcely possible for the relentless hand of death to cut asunder a closer, dearer, or more tender thread than that which bound together this simple pair; and yet they saw every day that there was urgent need for preparation for that awful and tremendous event, which, after they had once spoken of it, became the theme of their serious and most confidential communion.

Marcus Bland was sinking fast away; but to him death had no terrors, and though his griefs were those of the husband and the father, his hopes were those of the Christian, pure, and elevated, and holy; bearing him above all considerations either earthly or perishable. But she, the vine, who had bound her tendrils round his branches, and interwoven her very existence with his, and the young sapling, how were they to endure the storms of winter, without the shelter of the parent stem? For them he mourned in secret; for them he prayed, that every rough blast might be turned away, that genial showers might descend, and that they might live and flourish in the sunshine of eternal glory. And Alice prayed also, both with her husband and in secret; still bearing nobly on, for the end was not yet, and she had all those hallowed duties to perform which keep alive the heart of woman.

"You are better to day," said she to her husband one afternoon, when he seemed to be recovering from the severest paroxysms of his disorder.

"I am better," said he, "but I want breath; so Alice folded back the curtains of the bed, and opened the window, and they looked out together again upon the green fields, and the winding path, which he had so often trod when going forth on his pastoral duties.

"I want breath," continued he, "and voice, and energy, to tell you of the ineffable enjoyment of dying the death of the Christian. My heart is filled with that unspeakable love which we believe to be a part of the Divine essence; for which we have often prayed, and which is of such difficult attainment amidst the troubles and turmoils of life. Alice, thou shouldst have no tears for such an hour as this. Oh, cherish the remembrance of our parting scene, as the support and the consolation of thy future life; and when I am gone, think not of me as a man who was humble, and pious, and devout, but of one who lived and died in the love of Christ Jesus, and the faith which is built upon his resurrection: who, if he had any knowledge above that of the vilest sinner, owed that knowledge to the precepts of his heavenly Master; if he had any faith beyond that of the hypocrite, freely acknowledged that faith to be from above; and if he were at last supported through the bitterness of parting from the dearest of earthly companionships, knew that it could only be by the *interposition* of divine mercy.



“Think of these things, my beloved wife, more than of me. The cup of which we have partaken together, has been sweet as the waters of paradise. Remember from whence that cup was filled, and believe that there are rivers of delight in store for those who faithfully fulfil their appointed task. My last, my parting injunction is, to pray fervently; and to teach our child to pray. By forgetfulness of this duty, we often suffer estrangement from the Divine presence, and then, in our times of utmost need, when we would willingly return to this resource, it seems as if a veil had dropped between us and heaven. Pray, then, dear Alice, even when the refreshing dews are upon thy path, and there seems no immediate need for prayer.”

Alice made no answer; but she pressed his hand as if to say, “My path must henceforth be through the desert,” and then her husband went on.

“There is a strange fluttering at my heart, and I feel that death is near. Tremble not, I beseech thee, but raise my head, and let me die where it was my happiness to live. My poor boy! I would not have him near me, for he could not understand my situation, and might learn to be afraid of death. I have nothing to bequeath him, but a father’s blessing, and a father’s kiss; thou shalt press it upon his cheek when I am gone — the last and the dearest.” And then his words became inarticulate, and his breathing difficult; but Alice supported him to the very last unaided, and alone; for to her it would

have seemed like profanation, to call in the help of stranger-hands ; and having no fear of death, nor weak longing to escape from the presence of the dead, she remained alone in the chamber, through the solemn stillness of that hour which follows the mortal separation of soul and body ; while the room seems filled with the atmosphere of death, and voices of ethereal beings are whispering tidings from the land of spirits.

The first sound which startled her from that heavenly communion, was the voice of her child in the garden below. It became necessary to rouse herself, and descending into her little parlour, she caught up her boy in her arms, and for the first time burst into an agony of tears.

How solitary was that long night to the heart of the widowed mother ! Hour after hour she spent in the chamber of the deceased, watching that pale extended figure, until the white bed clothes seemed to tremble beneath the intensity of her gaze ; and sometimes she started at a fancied heaving of the breast : but faith, and love were strong within her, and sweeter to her was that silent vigil, than all which the busy world without could offer.

As the miser delights to count over every item of his hoarded treasure, so she recalled and dwelt upon each excellence of him, whose expiring lamp had, so far as regards the things of this world, left her in total darkness. But as she knew that another morning would dawn, and that the sun would return again ; that light would dance upon the hills, and the voice



of gladness be heard in the vallies, so she trusted, that the sun of righteousness would arise, and shine upon the darkness of her benighted soul; and she trusted not in vain, for oil was poured upon the troubled waters, and her soul was filled as with an holy calm.

Tell us, ye sons of pleasure, ye daughters of dissipation, how it is that you endure the blasts of the desert, without the aid of religion—without the consolation of prayer!

Though Alice Bland forgot not for a single moment that the wheels of destruction had passed over her earthly hopes, she remembered also, that she was poor; and that to the poor belong many duties, which the children of affluence and refinement think it inconsistent with the tenderness of wounded feeling to perform. To every arrangement for household comfort she attended with her wonted punctuality; and all things for the order and decency of the burial were of her contriving, without any omission of what was respectful and neighbourly.

The day before the funeral arrived, and Alice had not yet taken her child into the sacred chamber. She had herself been there since the first rising of the sun; and while the dew was yet glittering upon the leaves, she had gathered sprigs of thyme, and rosemary, to place within the coffin, and sweet-scented flowers to garnish the room; and now, when her silent breakfast was over, and she and the child, and the one domestic had knelt down together to pray for the

blessing of their heavenly Father upon the transactions of another day, she led her child up stairs, and raising him in her arms, he rested with his rosy fingers upon the side of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the dead. He looked earnestly and long, and then directed an enquiring glance to his mother, as if he asked of her an explanation of the strange mystery; but he made no remark, though he turned again and again, as if fascinated by the beauty of that still pale countenance, from which every trace of anxiety and care had passed away. It is true, the raven hair retained its few silver threads, but it rested on a brow as serenely beautiful as the surface of the summer sea, when its waters sleep beneath a cloudless sky, and make no ripple on the shore. And the bright eyes were closed upon the world for ever, not as in weariness or disgust, but as if, to their inward vision, was revealed a light, compared with which all without was perfect darkness; and the pure lips were closed, from whence had flowed the eloquence of feeling, the force of truth, and the inspiration of that wisdom which is from above.

Little Marcus soon returned to his usual sports, but many times during that day he broke off suddenly, and went and leaned upon his mother's knee, and once he looked anxiously in her face, and said, "Was it my father?" But his happy little bosom bounded with fresh enjoyment, and his mother tried in vain to make him sensible of his irreparable loss.

In the midst of the preparation for the last solemn

rites, Alice was not inactive ; but seemed to be thinking of every one more than of herself ; planning for their accommodation, and attending to their wants, yet all with a sweet mournful dignity, as if she bore about with her a sorrow too deep for common sympathy or condolence. The most trying part of that day, was the quiet after the funeral, when the guests were gone, and she retired without an object to direct her steps. Extreme restlessness, that dreadful accompaniment of the last degree of mental suffering, took possession of her, and she wandered from room to room, as if hoping in every place to leave some portion of the load that weighed upon her, until at length she sought consolation in prayer, and remembering her husband's parting injunction, knelt down, and humbly and fervently petitioned, that to her cup of bitterness there might be added some drops of comfort. And her petition was not rejected ; for sweet sleep stole over her wearied senses, and she awoke in the morning with fresh strength and courage to pursue her solitary way.

## CHAPTER III.

How little is known of what the human heart may endure and struggle through, by those who slumber in the lap of indulgence! Death, it is true, with his grim visage, and aim that no earthly power can avert, will sometimes steal in upon their visions, but they can gather round them a band of graceful mourners, and, having no active part to take in the ceremony of preparing for the grave, they are at liberty to sigh away their sorrows in costly weeds, and weep at will over the urn of the departed. But the luxury of weeping gracefully, nay, the rational privilege of mourning quietly, and without interruption, is too frequently denied to the poor. Wounded and weary, they must go forth again upon active service; they must engage in the bustling concerns of life, even when the light of life has been extinguished; they must arise and gird themselves for warfare, when their bosom's shield has been cleft asunder.

Thus it was that Alice Bland compelled herself, or *was compelled by circumstances*, to enter upon a

serious consideration of her present melancholy and deserted situation ; not in order the more fully to comprehend the extent and the depth of her affliction, but that she might arrange and act upon some plan for the future maintenance of herself and her child. That she must leave her sweet cottage, was a truth upon which she never once attempted to close her eyes ; because her doom was inevitable, and she had long known it : so she bestirred herself, and took an inventory of all her worldly possessions ; every now and then laying aside something useful or comfortable for a sick neighbour, or some trifling memento for an humble friend.

With such occupations she busied herself during the day ; and when the evening came, she went out with her presents, calling upon every one who had known and valued her husband's pastoral care, and saying some cheering words to them at parting, as if they were the mourners, and she the comforter. And truly she needed a comforter in her turn ; for, by the time she reached her home again, she was like the bough that has scattered its last leaf upon the merciless wind. But the Comforter was near — the promised Comforter, and darkness was turned into light at his presence.

Days passed away, and Alice still lingered at the cottage, for she was in treaty for a situation with a distant relative, and waited his answer and decision, before she entered upon the last hard duty of advertising a public sale, and disposing of all her goods



and household property upon the very spot where she had known so much happiness. The flower-beds which her husband had planted and weeded, were to be trodden down by the feet of strangers ; and the shrubs which he had reared and cherished, were to become the property of another. All, except the bed on which he died, she was willing to part with ; and the table on which he used to write, his chair, and a few simple things which possessed a sort of sanctity in her eyes. These she reserved for herself, and securing them in what was once her own chamber, rose early, and prepared for the long dreaded day.

Neighbours flocked in from all quarters, some from curiosity, and others in the hope of making a cheap bargain ; but all peeped about, and were equally earnest and willing to try the strength of chairs, and rap their knuckles upon china, and feel the weight of carpets and counterpanes.

There was not a corner in the whole house free from their intrusion ; and Alice, having resigned herself for that day entirely to the service of her friends, they were so charmed with her attention and activity, that they applied to her for information about almost every article. Alas ! she could but too well remember where and when they had been purchased, what elegant taste had selected them, and whose beloved fingers had hallowed them with his touch. But no one guessed what was passing in her mind ; and they plunged deeper and deeper into her



house-economy, ploughing up her feelings as they went. And no one pitied her, for she never wept in public; and many remarked, as they went away, that Alice Bland was just the cheerful, active sort of person, to get through with a thing of this kind;—nothing could have been more satisfactorily managed, and the refreshments were excellent.

Thus they dropped off, at first in merry troops, then one by one, until all departed, and Alice stood alone at her own door, looking around upon a scene of desolation. But where was little Marcus all this while? His mother had given him his dinner in a basket, and sent him out early in the morning to play in a neighbour's field, where he was allowed to keep a goat, with strict orders not to return until he was sent for, nor to wander from the field, but to fill his basket with flowers, and amuse himself, as well as he could, with his shaggy favourite.

At first the boy was happy enough, and thought his mother had seldom done a kinder thing; but perpetual amusement is difficult to ensure, even in the company of a goat, and, before eleven, Marcus was glad to eat his dinner, wondering, all the while, what he should do next. Oh! the flowers! he would take home such beauties for his mother; but why was he to stay so long, and why did nobody come for him; he sat down and wondered exceedingly. His goat, too, was neither so playful nor so fond of him, as it was at first; and sure he thought it was not like his own dear mother to keep him there all day. More-

over, he believed it was growing very late, though the sun was still high over head; and then the thought came across his mind, that his mother had forgotten him, and, as a very reasonable consequence, he began to cry.

Long after this consummation, Alice came into the field, and found him weeping bitterly; his cheeks flushed and swollen, and his bright eyes glimmering through tears, which burst forth afresh at the sight of her who had been the cause of his grievance.

Again Alice had to act the part of the comforter; and in fulfilling this holy duty, how often are we ourselves comforted!

The next morning Alice rose early, and, having dispatched a hasty breakfast, assisted the young woman, who had been her helpmate in domestic duties, to pack up her small wardrobe; and having added all that she was able to spare from her own, paid her wages, and bid her farewell with the affectionate interest of a friend; walking with her as far as the garden-gate, and then, holding out her hand again, she wished her happiness in her new situation, and hoped she would read her bible often, and be active and industrious, minding, above all things, to be faithful to the will of God.

The poor girl was unable to speak for her gathering tears, but carrying little Marcus in her arms to the gate, set him down beside his mother, and, placing in his hand a small basket, her parting present, kissed him fondly, and went silently away, her heart too full for expression.

"What shall we do now?" said Marcus, looking after her.

"We must go too," said his mother, and she drew him gently into the house, and bid him gather up all his playthings, and fill his basket with those which he liked best; and truly she could hardly have found him a more lasting occupation: for even when she had herself arranged all that she wished to take away, Marcus was not half satisfied with the selection he had made, but entreated his mother to wait one moment, while he emptied the basket upon the floor for the twentieth time.

"I will wait, at any rate, until the cart arrives," said his mother, "and see, here it is coming up the lane. You must make haste, for all that we cannot carry, is to be taken away in the cart."

"Why must they be taken away at all? are they not ours?"

"Yes! — but we are going too."

"Going! where? and what for?"

"I cannot tell you now, my love. You must make haste, for the man will not like to wait."

In a few minutes the little furniture which Alice had reserved for herself, with some chests of household goods, were placed in the cart; and the man drove away, whistling as he went, and never looked back, nor thought of the mother and the child whom he had left so lonely in their deserted dwelling.

"Are you quite ready?" said Alice to her boy, as

he made his appearance, looking sorrowfully round the empty room.

"It does not look like our anniversary now," said he.

"It is well it does not," thought his mother, as she let him by the hand, and closing the door, turned the key in the lock for the last time.

By how sudden, and yet simple a stroke, the flood-gates of memory may sometimes be thrown open!

Alice Blunt had gone through the trials of the past week, with a resignation that was wonderful even to herself; but just as that familiar sound caught her ear — the turning of the key in her own door — there came back upon her mind the overwhelming recollection of the many sabbaths, when she and her beloved husband had walked together to the house of God, holding sweet counsel as they went. And now she was going forth with her poor child, like Hagar into the wilderness; but oh! more desolate than Hagar, she was going a stranger into the wilderness of this world!

Close beside her, and half hid amongst the leaves of the rose-tree, the jessamine, and the clematis, was the rustic bench on which they used to sit through the twilight hour, — the only hour which their domestic economy allowed for indolence; and even then, they were accustomed to hallow this season of rest by conversing upon heavenly themes; encouraging each other to fresh exertion in the Christian warfare, numbering their blessings, and not unfrequently offering up hymns of thankfulness and praise



to him who had filled their cup of happiness so full.

Alice looked around, and there was not a shrub nor flower, which had not its accompanying chain of recollections, closely interwoven with her heart of hearts. There was the bush of sweet-brier growing beside the parlour window, when it used to offer up its welcome perfume after the summer shower; the evening primrose, now closely folded up, that would soon open out its delicate flowers, where there would be no eye to gaze upon its moonlight beauty; the bright laurel, that spread its deep shadow upon the walk; and the festoons of rustling ivy, "never sere." All, all, were old familiar friends, and Alice was leaving them for ever!

"Oh! bend my spirit to thy will, and strengthen me for thy service!" was the inward prayer of her heart to him, who alone knoweth the bitterness of the portion which he sometimes sees meet to set before his suffering creatures.

Alice and her boy passed through the garden-gate, closing it gently after them, and entered the green lane; and then, what a home sound there was in their voices, enclosed, as they were, between the high hedges of hawthorn, whose white blossoms fell, like flakes of snow, upon the green herbage below, or sailed away a scented burthen upon the passing gale. Here she had been accustomed to talk of household comforts to him for whose sake all comforts were doubly valued; for here they used to catch



the first glimpse of little Marcus throwing wide the gate, and here they used to see the smoke of their own chimney, and think and speak of the enjoyments of their own fireside.

"It is the Lord's will," said Alice, after she had looked round for the last time, and then she walked on in silence, until Marcus who had not before this moment been fully aware of the extent of his bereavements, stopped suddenly, and called out, "But the goat!"

"Oh! I had quite forgot to say anything about the goat," replied his mother, "but we shall have to call in the village to leave the key, and I will ask our neighbours if they will allow him to remain in the field; he will be much happier there, than in the town where we are going."

"And should not we be happier too? Let us stay, mother! do!" And he looked up into her face with such a pitiful and imploring countenance, that Alice felt it almost beyond her strength to combat this new difficulty.

"We must go, my love," said she, "or we shall be too late for the coach;" but it was not until after many and repeated assurances, that they would travel very fast with four horses, and that a man would really blow a horn, that she succeeded in dragging the little obstinate away at a tolerable speed.

Having reached the public road, only a few minutes after the time which Alice had fixed in her own mind to be there, they could see at a great distance a cloud

of dust, in the midst of which a heavy coach came clattering down the hill, and stopped within a yard of the place where they were standing; the outside passengers looking half smothered with heat, and choked with dust, and the horses panting, and blowing, and tossing the foam from their mouths.

"All's right," said the guard, as he slammed the door to, with such violence as made little Marcus start from his seat: and then the horses went off again at full speed, the harness rattled, and the driver cracked his whip, the heavy wheels grinding up the road as they went, and the dust arising in thick volumes, and settling upon every object both within and without.

Alice shrunk back into the corner of the coach, for the other side was occupied by a young lady and her brother, fresh from Cambridge, whose restless eyes examined the face of the young widow, with as little delicacy as if it had been a new pattern for a waistcoat: while Marcus, as soon as the first shock of astonishment had gone off, composed himself to rest, and silently thrusting his hand into his mother's, and leaning his cheek upon her arm, fell into a quiet sleep from which she would have been sorry to awake him to the most distant participation in the agony which she was enduring.

Thankful for the protection of her weeds, the poor widow bent down her head, and fixed her eyes upon the countenance of her child, with feelings, which

those only can imagine, who know what it is to shrink from the obtrusive glance of strangers, within the inner tabernacle of the soul, where one pure image is enshrined in the spotless garment of unchangeable and holy love.

## CHAPTER IV.

IF the kind reader will condescend to take another view of the desolate widow, it must be within the walls of an humble dwelling, one of an extensive row of houses which formed a narrow street in the outskirts of the metropolis.

Here Alice Bland had fixed herself on account of the cheapness of the accommodation ; here she occupied two small rooms, from neither of which she could see a single blade of green grass, or space of sky sufficient for making any observation upon the weather ; and here she had agreed with a fashionable milliner, to spend her morning, noon, and evening hours in arranging gay ribbons and many-coloured head dresses, and mimic flowers and feathers, to adorn the sunny brows of youth, or conceal the wrinkles of old age, to add lustre to the bloom of beauty, or beguile the eye of the beholder from the deep shadow of cankering care.

“ Who can have a heart light enough to bear such ‘ blushing honour’s as these upon her head ? ’ ” said

Alice, as she held a splendid turban in her hand; "and these silvery flowers, who can feel pure enough to wear them; and this richly worked handkerchief, who but an eastern prince, would purchase and use it?"

Could she have followed her specimens of handiwork to their place of exhibition, she might have seen the splendid turban mounted upon the dark and shrivelled forehead of one, who scowled upon the happiness of others, without the heart to enjoy, or the power to blast it. She might have seen the pure and spotless flowers, drooping over throbbing temples, where every vein was flushed, and contrasting their silvery light with the wild flashes of a restless eye, that glared with the lurid brightness of false and feverish excitement. And the delicate and costly handkerchief, she might have seen suspended in the red hand, that told its own tale, of "excessive turtle, and good living." She might have seen all these, and a thousand incongruities beside, which would have driven her home, even to her own comfortless apartment, with something very much akin to satisfaction, if not with real enjoyment. But Alice Bland knew little of the fashionable world, and fondly fancied that the mysterious beings for whom she was perpetually providing embellishments, the richest, gayest, and most costly, which her ingenuity could invent, must in themselves possess a charm, and a power of enjoyment, beyond what common natures were acquainted with; and consequently, she thought her own portion by comparison, more bitter than it really was. Pos-



sessed with this idea, she found it difficult at all times to guard against repining; especially when any trifling circumstance brought back a quickened remembrance of the sweet home she had lost; when she looked out from her little casement, and saw that the moon was high in the heavens; for even brick walls are beautiful by moonlight; and when the rays of the setting sun, reaching a certain angle in the opposite side of the street, slightly illuminated one pane of her window, and a small portion of her curtains; for then she knew that the same sun was tingeing with golden beauty, the tops of the trees, and the village spire, upon which she had often gazed so fondly. But most of all, when her beloved child came home from school, weary and dispirited, and seemed to pine for the green fields, and the fresh air, to which he had been accustomed: then her spirit sunk within her, and she was almost ready to say, "my burthen is greater than I can bear!"

It was some weeks after her settlement in town, and during one of these fits of melancholy abstraction, that the sound of carriage wheels was heard rolling up to the widow's door, and a thundering knock soon followed. Alice looked out, half frightened, and saw by the elegance of the equipage, that its occupant must be of rank; but she had no time to make further observations, for a light figure sprung from the step as soon as the door was opened, and the carriage drove off immediately.

What was the astonishment of Alice, when she

found that she was herself the object of this unexpected visit ; and when the same light figure walked with easy condescension into her own apartment, her fine face adorned with smiles and graces, which disappeared the moment the door was closed, and they two were left alone.

Alice rose up to beg the lady would be seated ; but she had already thrown herself into a chair, with evident petulance and chagrin, at the same time drawing off her glove from an exquisitely beautiful hand, and untying a close bonnet, which she threw back, and exhibited a countenance, from which the spirit of a ministering angel ought to have looked forth. Alas ! how much the finest works of creation may be perverted from their original design ! Fatigued with harassing and despicable cares, her young brow was already crossed with wrinkles ; and her dark eye shot forth fierce flashes of jealousy, and revenge ; while her lips, that looked as if formed only for cherub smiles, were distorted and compressed with rage and indignation.

“ Audacious woman ! ” she at length began ; then suddenly recollecting that she had in reality no just cause of grievance, she lowered her tone, and commenced upon another key.

“ I have been directed to you, as the person whose ingenuity invented that exquisitely managed turban, which the Marchioness of —— exhibited on Friday night, and which has for ever established her celebrity in the fashionable world.”

"I am that person, Ma'am, and I shall be happy to execute any thing of the same kind for ——"

"For me! presumptuous wretch! do you suppose I would humble myself so far, as even to employ the same fingers which work for the Marchioness of ——? No! I would rather make my appearance in the world with that widow's cap of yours upon my head;" and then in an under tone she said, or rather sighed, "Heaven only knows what I would give to be entitled to wear it." While Alice, discovering at the same time that she wore a wedding ring upon her finger, was so shocked and startled by the coincidence, that she could not help fearing some wild maniac had found her way to her obscure abode.

The lady however went on, more coolly, but with a tone and look of authority, which were but little calculated to produce the intended effect.

"I have come," said she, "to demand of you the only reparation which it is in your power to offer me. I have formed my plan; it is only for you to act upon it. The Marchioness will most probably apply to you again, for her beauty is not of the kind to maintain itself. I have purchased a gauze which is of the exact colour to antipathize with her complexion. Now I insist upon your making it up in time for the grand entertainment at Lady L——'s, and telling the Marchioness, who will undoubtedly call upon you, that you never saw any thing half so becoming in your life. She has implicit faith in your good taste. You will lose nothing by it; for even if the joke

should be discovered, you ensure me for life; and every one must allow, that by such an exchange, you lessen your labour at any rate."

"Let me assure you, Ma'am," said Alice, with great gravity, "that in making such an application to me, you have quite mistaken my character and principles."

"Character and principles! how you talk, woman! We never hear of such things, except when we are urged to do what is disagreeable to us."

"Then I make use of the plea upon your own ground; for it would be extremely disagreeable to me to do so mean a thing, as that which you propose to me, and what is more, I will not do it!"

"You are very blunt, my good woman; but I hear you have lived in the country, where it would be a thousand pities for talents such as yours to be buried. Think how much the patronage of a lady of rank may do for you. There is Mrs. B——, who was brought up to the same employment as yourself, now sporting her carriage."

"It is idle," replied Alice, "to waste your temptations upon me, for I am fixed in my determination. I have but one object in life beyond the fulfilment of my duty as a christian, and that is, to secure a maintenance for my child, and if possible, to place him, when he shall be a man, upon the same footing in society which his father held; but even to secure this darling object, I would not stoop to do that which would render me contemptible in my own eyes, and guilty before Heaven."



"Nonsense, nonsense! You make too serious a thing of a mere joke. Have you no love for a joke?"

"Not for a mean joke."

"Then you will not oblige me?" and the lady smiled with such syren sweetness, that Alice again examined the case, and enquired of her reason whether it were utterly incompatible with the feelings of an upright and generous heart; and her resolution was stronger than before.

Assured of this, the lady was obliged to commence another attack upon fresh ground, and casting down her eyes, declared that she would in her turn be serious; for notwithstanding a natural playfulness of temper, which sometimes carried her away, she was in reality a very wretched creature. "I was married," said she, "at the age of seventeen, to a wealthy old peer, whom I hate as cordially as I love his establishment and his purse. I cannot say more, without exposing secrets, and betraying confidence; but there are reasons, why I would sacrifice my daily food and my nightly rest, to humble the Marchioness of —; in fact, she must be humbled, and if you will not serve me, some one else shall."

So saying, she looked at her watch, and hearing at the same time the sound of her carriage entering the narrow street, she rose and walked haughtily to the door; but not before she had tried, as a last resource, the offer of a bribe, which Alice rejected with more indignation than good breeding; assuring her at the same time, that she would rather be the destitute



widow, who is compelled to earn her daily portion with pain and labour, than the rich and titled lady who scruples not to enter the dwellings of the poor, to insult them with her passions, and disgust them with her folly.

“Is this a specimen of the envied and privileged class of society?” said Alice, as she looked out upon the gay livery and the prancing horses! “It is better to be a ‘lone woman’ in a desert, than such a pitiable wretch as this!” and she sat down more cheerfully resigned to her fate, than she had been before. Indeed the constant employment which her good taste and industry ensured her, served very much to while away the monotony of her life, and to keep alive the hope that burned within her breast, and gave a charm and a zest to every occupation.

## CHAPTER V.

It was not from innate skill in the art of beautifying, that Alice Bland was able to succeed so well in her new occupation ; nor from any thing innate, unless a naturally clear perception of the fitness of things, with a quick eye for the arrangement of colours and general effect, might be called so : for she had in her early years acquired a tolerably correct knowledge of this branch of business, so important to the great world of fashion, during many repeated visits to an aunt who was a milliner ; and it had occurred to her, in her forlorn situation, as being the most likely means of enabling her, not only to be independent herself, but to procure such instruction for her boy as might fit him for the future high calling, to which she was determined, if possible, to devote him.

That he might walk in his father's steps, was the first wish of her heart ; for this she humbled herself, for this she toiled, and for this she endured all present privations cheerfully. Yet still there would sometimes

flit across her mind, certain doubts as to the propriety of her calling; for she was rising in celebrity, consequently she was more frequently admitted behind the scenes; and ever since the visit of the unknown lady, she had been perplexed with apprehensions that she was, though in a remote way, ministering to evil passions, and selfish and contemptible gratifications. Still it was an occupation, constant and unremitting, and she found at the end of the first year, that her circumstances were materially improved.

Another year passed away, and she was able to place her boy at a higher school, where he made astonishing progress in his learning; and oh! the heart of the fond mother would bound with delight, whenever he came to her with a demand for a fresh supply of books, and when he told her with pride in his dark eyes and blushes on his cheeks, of his master's commendations.

Another year passed, and Alice became the private and confidential assistant of many ladies, some of whom would gladly have purchased, with a considerable sacrifice of their rank and riches, a renewal of their waning beauty. This was a kind of life that Alice, in her heart, despised; and she began to think seriously of entering upon one, which, though less profitable, would be more dignified; and her decision was more easily made after an interview which she had, about this time, with an unfortunate lady, who had been struggling for fifty years against the inroads of deformity, and disease.

Alice was sent for one evening, and shown, by a private passage, into a splendid apartment, in which she waited some time for the lady's orders to proceed to business. At last she was ushered into the presence, and found herself in a long dressing room, every inch of which was filled with perfumes and cosmetics, laces and ribbons, sattins, and embroidery. At the farther end, and almost buried in rich damask cushions, she beheld a lean and haggard figure, whose good pleasure, delicately hinted, was no other than this, that she wanted in plain words, to be made up for the evening; while two or three waiting women, hurrying to and fro, offered cordials and stimulants every moment.

Shocked and horrified at the unnatural spectacle, Alice remained speechless with astonishment, and recurring to the remembrance of him, who was still a sort of second conscience to her, she shrunk from the prostitution of her talents to so vile a purpose.

"You are ill, Ma'am, I fear," said Alice.

"No! no! I am going to the Duchess of B——'s. The foreign Ambassadors are to be there, in short, every body in the world,—and—and—I have heard of your good taste and ingenuity. My women make a fool of me. Try what you can do. You shall not have to repent the waste of your time and trouble."

In vain did Alice protest that she had no skill,—that she was giving up her business,—that she never did any thing in this way. All would not do. The women went on, consulting her in every thing they

did, until she was inadvertently drawn in, though scarcely to give more than a casting vote with regard to colours and ornaments.

The poor lady was miserably ill, and dreadfully deformed, but so skilfully was the whole affair managed, that when, with the help of two women, she rose up and walked across the floor, there was such a majestic rustling of silks, and such a graceful waving of feathers in the scented atmosphere, that you might almost at the first glance have mistaken for a gem, the worthless pebble concealed within its costly casket.

In constant attendance upon this miserable creature, was a fair young girl, the daughter of a poor relation; and it was thought by some, that Miss Salisbury paid dearly for her introduction to fashionable life, by the duty of supporting half the weight of her patroness; who, in sober truth, was not able to walk alone, and therefore used to lean languidly upon the arm of the poor girl, who looked about her in astonishment, wondering whether she was really happier than when she rambled in her father's green fields at home.

Miss Salisbury was now called for, and in the mean time, the lady viewed herself from head to foot in a tall mirror, and then, turning triumphantly to Alice, asked what she thought of her?

Never before in her whole life, had Alice been so puzzled how to answer conscientiously. She hesitated, and her silence was graciously construed into a tribute of admiration.



Miss Salisbury appeared, offering her ready arm, and the procession moved on.

"Stay one moment," said the lady, "you have forgot my fan."

The women flew back to the drawers and cabinets, and Alice, in the mean time, taking from her pocket a little testament, pressed it into the lady's extended hand with both her own, and hurrying down the private stairs, escaped from the house as if from the den of an enchantress.

"I will give up this disgusting business," said she to herself, as she walked across the wide square in which the house was situated. "I will disgrace *his* name no longer. The meanest office of servitude would be more dignified than this. But whither am I wandering?" for the scene she had just witnessed seemed to have made her insensible to the danger of being alone at that hour in the streets of London, and she now looked around and above her, and saw that the stars were shining as meekly upon that human hive, as upon the flowering hawthorn, that scattered its white blossoms in the green lane beside her once happy dwelling; and she thought the spangled heavens above, were like an ark of promise, that God will be equally near to those who call upon him in the crowded city, as in the quiet grove; in the haunts of man, as in the solitudes of the wilderness.

The path of the true christian is not always either peaceful or pleasant. He must be content to labour through the dust, and the drudgery of a bustling

world ; but even here he will find his happy times of refreshment, his sweet seasons of rest.

When Alice reached her home, her first object was to look at her sleeping child ; to smooth his pillow, and to press upon his cheek a kiss so tender, that it could not have disturbed the dreams of a slumbering cherub.

“ Poor child !” said she, “ I am giving up thy only prospect of success, but thou shalt never feel the injury I have done thee. I will work doubly hard, and thou shalt yet be a scholar and a gentleman. Thy father’s virtues shall guide and direct thee, and may a blessing be upon thy path !”

Alice gazed for a long time upon his spotless and beautiful cheek, over which the fringe of his long dark eye-lashes cast a deep and mournful shadow ; and while she gazed, a cold feeling of apprehended danger stole upon her soul, making that precious object seem dearer than he had ever been before ; and then tears of unutterable tenderness rushed into her eyes, and she soothed his slumbers with the following simple words :—

#### THE WIDOW’S SONG TO HER CHILD.

“ Sweet be thy sleep, beloved one !  
From fear and danger free,  
The toils, the cares, of day are done,  
And I return to thee.

The pilgrim loves his native home,  
Beyond the wide blue sea ;  
Though far his wandering steps may roam,  
Yet not as I love thee.

The wild bird has her nestlings all,  
High in the sheltering tree,  
Her faithful mate to hear her call,  
But I have only thee.

Oh ! say not so ; the hand that guides  
The sailor o'er the sea,  
That stills the storm, and stems the tides,  
That hand is stretch'd o'er thee.

Beside thy couch of nightly sleep,  
A guardian angel, see !  
When tears thy midnight pillow steep,  
Those tears are bless'd to thee.

Thy cares, thy griefs, alike are known,  
How deep soe'er they be ;  
And number'd out before that throne,  
Where mercy pleads for thee.

## CHAPTER VI.

"THESE fields are not like our own fields," said Marcus to his mother, as they walked out one sabbath evening in the suburbs of the city. "Here the grass is worn away with trampling feet, and the birds are frightened from the hedges. When shall we go back again, mother, for I am tired of dust and noise? My head aches all day; and sometimes when I ought to be busy with my lessons, I am thinking of that pleasant home we had in the country."

Alice looked in his face while he was speaking, and saw, with speechless anxiety, what she had often feared before, that the confinement of their present situation, with the application and study that were necessary for his success at school, were robbing his cheek of its bloom, and casting a premature and unnatural shade upon his fair brow; and then she felt, and acknowledged for the first time, that it was indeed a hard thing to be poor. "But he shall not suffer," said she; and the very next day she went

in search of lodgings at a little distance from the dust and the smoke of the city, where they might have the sight, at least, of a small plot of garden ground.

It was necessary to pay twice the sum for these lodgings which she had paid before ; but she hesitated not one moment, though her means were considerably reduced, and a fearful uncertainty seemed to hang over her future prospects. Yet such is the power of an energetic mind, assisted by a right faith, that she was always ready to adopt upright and decisive measures ; leaving the consequences in the hands of him who alone can know whether reward or chastisement will be most conducive to the good of his creatures : and in the mean time, prepared her mind either to rejoice in success, or to submit patiently to disappointment.

There was but one evil in the wide range of human suffering, upon which she could not look with a firm and collected mind. Constant, and almost laborious exertion she had been accustomed to, through the whole of her past life ; and therefore it added no weight to the cares which pressed heavily upon her, but rather took off the keen edge of sorrow, by furnishing a constant supply of objects, which, though trifling in themselves, demanded a portion of her interest and attention. But this was an evil which came upon her in her hours of melancholy musing, not like the shadow of a mighty cloud, for it seemed to have no termination, and that it would never pass



away. Loneliness and labour, and privation, she could bear, and had borne cheerfully; but whenever she tried to look upon this overwhelming sorrow, it appeared to admit of no palliation: for this wound there was no balm, and the expression of her rebellious spirit, as it writhed beneath it, was, too often, "Spare me this!"

Alice Bland was now deprived of all means of increasing her source of pecuniary subsistence; but she had laid by what to her was a considerable sum of money, during the last few years; which, added to the allowance for the widows of poor clergymen, raised her above all fear of actual want. But so little was it in accordance with her disposition to give way to indolence for the present, or negligence of the future, that she set about with great perseverance and industry, to pursue some other mode of procuring an addition to her slender income. For this purpose, she entered into an engagement to supply a bazaar with fancy needlework, and late and early did she labour for the scanty pittance that was doled out to her, — a minute fraction of the whole value of the article; often, when her eyes and fingers were weary with her monotonous employment, rousing herself again by the hope of being able to take her boy for a few weeks into the country, when he should again be liberated at the midsummer holidays.

Marcus, was now nearly twelve years old, and, in spite of the paleness of his complexion, you could

hardly have found a more handsome or noble looking fellow. "So exactly like his father," said Alice, for she had no higher standard of manly excellence or beauty; but there were those, who, remembering his father with no such partial admiration, would have said the son bid fair for being a finer man in every respect; and that he was no worse for adding his mother's energy and decision, to his father's calmness and refinement.

Perhaps the reader may smile to find the term refinement applied to the child of a poor widow like Alice Bland; but refinement may, and does exist sometimes in the humble walks of life; and what is more surprising still, it is sometimes altogether wanting where there seems to have been every thing conducive to its cultivation and growth.

In talking of refinement, we are apt to think it belongs only to the higher classes of society; and is the result of what is called a finished education, and must necessarily be accompanied by polite accomplishments, and polished manners. But true refinement (or rather delicacy of feeling, for the one implies a process, and the other a quality) is more the gift of nature than the production of art; and thus it may be found in the cottage, and wanted in the drawing-room; it may be disguised by the broad peculiarities of provincial dialect, and mimicked in vain by the mincing phraseology of the boarding school; it may exist under the coarse and toil-worn exterior of the peasant, beautifying all the tender offices of life, and

giving to home charities, and domestic virtues, the charm of generous sympathy, and high honour; and it may be sought for amongst all the artificial adornments of the fashionable and high born, and not found, where it is most wanted, in the interchange of kindness, the conferring of benefits, and the necessary and mutual dependance of man upon his brother man.

Alice Bland, and her interesting boy, were not unacquainted with this feeling. They had learned to watch each other's eyes, and to know when the least shadow of anxiety or care needed the gentle hand, or the kind word, to chase it away; and they knew also how to make great sacrifices, for they were all in all to each other; and they could each give up a darling object for the other's good, without a sigh or a tear; in short, without betraying by the slightest difference of look or manner that it was a sacrifice. And if, in all these little acts of self resignation, Alice bore the palm, it was not from any want of affection in him who was the object of them, but merely because she was a woman; and we all know it is deeply implanted in the heart of woman, to love what she does love better than herself.

Thus they lived on, the mother and the child, mutually ministering to each other's enjoyment; and perhaps the absorbing interest which occupied their thoughts, made them a little too forgetful of the wide world without, and perhaps also, it left too little of the warmest and tenderest feelings of the heart for

devotion to higher objects. However it might be, we know that these exclusive attachments are not permitted to exist long in this state of being, without a blight ; and that, from whatever quarter the blight may come, it is directed by him who punishes in order that we may look to him for reward ; who wounds, that we may ask for healing at his hands.

The summer came, the bright and joyful summer, and Alice and her son left behind them, without a sigh, the congregated thousands who pant in the heated atmosphere of the metropolis, during the sweet season of the springing of flowers in the green fields, and the singing of birds in the waving and shadowy branches of the trees.

They left without a sigh, for they were going to renew their acquaintance with the face of nature ; a face like that of an old friend, early known, and dearly loved, and mingled in fond recollections with all their favourite themes of thought and conversation.

A kind acquaintance resident in Kent, had engaged for them a small cottage in the most picturesque part of that county ; and when the coach stopped at the door, they sprang from it as if they were expecting to meet a home welcome. Every thing around looked so green, so fresh, so cool and quiet, that their hearts were filled with gratitude, and they longed to offer thanks to some human being, who might be feeling like themselves. But no ! there had been no kind hand busy with the work of



preparation ;—no living creature in that remote situation knew of their existence until the week preceding, nor cared for their comfort and accommodation, when they did know ; and they soon found that thanks were only due to that Power, who spreadeth out the heavens as a canopy, and maketh the earth a garden, in which man may find all that can delight his senses, and fill his soul with admiration. Nor were they forgetful of the duty of acknowledging his mercies ; for when the evening came, they knelt down together, and with united hearts offered up the tribute of their thankfulness and joy.

The next day they rambled free and uncontrolled, and day after day they spent in the same manner, Marcus amusing himself with collecting the flowers and plants with which he had long been endeavouring to make himself acquainted, and often sitting down with his pencil to sketch an old tree or village church, never dreaming how exquisitely valuable all these little memorials of his enjoyments would one day become, to her who was ever at his side, watching him with maternal fondness, and dwelling with something of prophetic interest, upon every development of his clear and comprehensive mind.

“ I should like to die in the country,” he would often say ; “ that birds might sing over my grave, and green grass grow all around me. Mother, did you ever look into that little churchyard at the end of the street where we used to live in the City ? Don’t lay me there when I am dead, for I think I could not



rest under those hot stones and dusty nettles." And then his mother's eyes would fill with tears, for she saw more clearly every day that one prevailing thought was giving an unnatural solemnity to his young mind, and throwing over his early years the deep shadows of premature decay.

Still they were happy—happy as those who sit down for one uninterrupted hour of cheerful, and intimate, and confidential converse, before a long, long separation. But the boy gathered no strength in the country, and the mother found there was more and more need for her to shelter under the shadow of the mighty Rock, for that life would soon be to her a weary land.

Oh ! it needs religion to reconcile us to the thought of death !

## CHAPTER VII.

It was not many weeks after the return of the widow with her son to the city, that she found it necessary to call in medical advice; for he was evidently sinking fast; and though she had little faith that human skill could save him, she determined that nothing should be spared which might lessen the suffering of his last days.

His complaint was pronounced to be one under which he might linger for some time; but little encouragement was held out to hope for his ultimate recovery. The poor boy, however, was not destined to pine away the victim of protracted suffering. His disease made rapid progress, and he was soon so much an invalid, as to be compelled to keep his bed; and then his mother felt doubly thankful that she had removed him from the close and dismal apartments which they first occupied; for now they could look out upon the blue sky, and see the brightness of the morning sun upon the branches of a willow and a laburnum, which grew beside their window;

where Alice had her little garden of mignonette in a narrow box, containing all her property in the wide realm of mother earth.

It was on the first day of September, that eventful day when the heart of the sportsman bounds with delight, as he gathers up his forces, and sets off with "slaughtering gun;" himself and his dogs uniting upon one common level, for one purpose, and with one feeling, to disturb the stillness of the deserted harvest fields, taint the pure air of a fine autumnal morning, and break in upon the peace of the most harmless and unprotected of earth's creatures: it was on this day that Alice Bland sat at the window of her quiet chamber, sometimes looking out upon the yellow leaves fluttering for a moment in the buoyant air, and then settling amongst their withered companions upon the bosom of that common parent, who offers a last refuge to the fallen, the faded, and the forlorn; and then turning her anxious gaze upon him of whom the autumn leaves were but too true an emblem.

He had been sleeping for some hours, and when he awoke, he asked his mother to come nearer. "Sit down beside me," said he, "upon my bed, and let me hold your hand. Dear mother, I have been thinking, that when I am gone, you will be left entirely alone."

Alice turned away her face, but she was able to answer with a clear voice, "There is no loneliness, my child, where God is."

“ I know it, mother ; I know that God is everywhere, and that he will not turn away from those who call upon his name ; but there are times when we cling to a kind hand, and listen to a voice that is sweeter than music, and feel that we cannot bear to be alone. Who will meet you at the door when you come home ? who will pray with you at night ? and oh ! my mother, when you are ill, or in sorrow, who will sit beside your bed, and watch you so tenderly as you are watching me ? ”

“ My child,” replied his mother, “ we must not venture upon these minute enquiries, into what we are capable or not capable of enduring. Who could love as I have loved, and bear to lose what I must lose, if, when the account was closed, each individual item of the great sum of affection should be counted over, and its weight and value estimated after it was gone for ever. It is for those who suffer, and feel their own weakness, to endeavour so to journey along the pilgrimage of life, that their steps may neither be impeded by the stones and stumbling-blocks that lie scattered in their path ; nor led astray by the flowers that grow by the way-side : and in order to do this, it is necessary to keep our eyes fixed stedfastly upon the star of promise, the only star that is never lost in clouds. Wounded and broken as I am, and lonely as I shall soon be, my heart is yet supported by faith ; not the presumptuous faith that a miracle will be wrought in my favour ; that I shall be preserved from sickness and

sorrow, or that celestial spirits will be sent down to smooth my dying pillow ; but the humble faith that he, in whom I put my trust, will so temper the feelings of my soul, that while I endure the common lot of humanity, I shall not feel, as I have done, such entire dependance upon the sweet sympathies of kindred minds ; but that, when I come to the last hours of my solitary life, I shall be supported above all weak longings, even for thy care and kindness, my beloved child ; and sustained by the undying hope of entering into that realm of happiness, where I trust thy father is, and where thou wilt soon be."

" You are right, mother," replied her son ; " we will talk of these things no more. God is all-sufficient ;" and then he lifted up his hands, and his weak voice, and prayed earnestly that his mother might be made the peculiar care of her Almighty Father ; that her earthly trials might not be long, and that they might soon meet, where there should be no more tears, and no more separation.

Three days after this conversation took place, Alice Bland was sitting, at the same hour, in the same chamber, and beside the same bed, on which a long extended figure lay, in the stillness of everlasting repose. The sweet calm of unbroken serenity was upon his features, and his white hands were stretched out in motionless and marble coldness by his side — his hands, on which the mother's eyes were fixed ; for oh ! how well could she remember the many days and nights, when those fingers, warm



and pliant, and gentle, in their infantine tenderness, had played upon her cheek ; how distinctly could she recall each varying expression of that fair countenance, as of a book, every line of which was engraven upon her heart, in characters indelible and clear, though the original page was sealed for ever.

But let not rude and unhallowed fingers attempt to lift the veil that is drawn over the sacred altar of a mother's love. This venerated shrine offers no wonderful exhibition to the gaze of the curious observer ; but here, as to the altars of old, the weary, and the wounded, fly from the arrows of persecution for safety and protection. Here the tears of the penitent may flow in peace ; here the frailties upon which the world would trample in disdain, may find a cloak ; and here, the erring wanderer, who has made shipwreck of his hopes, may return to the welcome of a home.

Alice had no assistant in the work of preparation. All day she occupied that silent chamber, with the feeling of one who stands upon a small and solitary island, in the midst of the wide ocean, and will not step into his frail boat before the hour appointed for him to launch forth alone upon the boundless expanse of friendless and inhospitable waters. And when the night came, she had no weak fears, nor fantastic visions of wandering spirits ; but drew closer in the darkness to the bed-side, until wearied nature sank under the long vigil, and sleep drew around her the curtain of forgetfulness.

It was but for a few brief days and nights that Alice could be permitted to sit and gaze upon her last earthly treasure; and oh! how solemn was the dawn of each succeeding morning as it rose upon the living and the dead! How silently the still evening closed around!— Yet in that sweet hour, when the husbandman returns from the field of labour, when the cattle are driven down from the hills, and the sheep are gathered into the fold; when the weary bird flies back to the woods, and covers her nestlings with her brooding wings; when the mother smoothes the pillow of her child, and presses on its rosy cheek her farewell kiss; when all the softening influences of domestic peace and home affection are drawn around the heart;— even in that sweet hour, Alice uttered no lamentation, and the tears that chased each other down her cheeks, were not tears of repining; for she had not been one of those who leave the commencement of the great and important work until the time when there is urgent need for its full and entire completion; who enter the vineyard to feast upon the grapes, having never pruned the vines; who go forth into the harvest-field to reap, having never sown the precious seed. In the spring time of her life, in the morning of her days, she had diligently sought the true fountain; and now, when every other draught was turned to bitterness, she found and felt the efficacy of the waters of everlasting life.

A second time Alice Bland stood a deep and so-

litary mourner by the side of the closing grave. Over her pale features was spread the calmness of resignation ; and none of the surrounding throng of lookers on knew, or cared to know, with what feelings she turned away, when the last solemn rites were over, from that little churchyard — not the noisy space of ground allotted to the burial of the dead, which her son had so often spoken of with disgust and horror ; but a quiet resting-place, one they had fixed upon together during their last walk into the country. Here she had stood beside the grave, not only the chief, but the sole mourner ; and here she left with her buried treasure all the hopes and the affections which bound her to this troubled life.

From this now sacred spot of earth, Alice returned to her home.—Home ! what is home ? Surely there must be something more than a hired tenement to constitute a home ; but Alice had in this wide world nothing more. Happy — happy is it for those who feel that their home is “ an habitation not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ! ”

The Christian character is almost universally described as one which is, and must be, at variance with what is commonly denominated the world ; consequently, the Christian church is called the church militant, and the Christian himself is often spoken of as one who is compelled to fight the good fight. All the good lessons which we learn from our infancy, our observations upon the world in general,

the experience of every day, and the precepts of the holy scriptures, combine to teach us that the utmost stretch of faith, and perseverance, and watchfulness, and zeal, are necessary to protect us against the mastery of evil passions within, and the temptations of the world without. It is, however, graciously permitted to us, in almost every situation in life, to enjoy the consolation of human help; to have some star or stars in our own low sphere to light us on our way; some kind voice to cheer us on our pilgrimage; some home of welcome in the hearts we love, where the wounded may fly for healing, and the weary for repose.

How thankful, then, ought we to be for this mingling of earthly affections with heavenly; this lightening of the task of duty: this sweetening of the cup of self-denial! and how deep, how sincere, should be our pity for those unto whom this merciful dispensation is not extended, unto whom it is decreed, by the wisdom that erreth not, that they shall journey through the wilderness alone; unto whom the sentence has gone forth, "Behold! I will take away the desire of thine eyes as with a stroke!

In this situation the Christian is most severely tried; for here no earthly encouragement is held out, and whatever is done must be done purely for the love of God, for the pleasure of obeying his law, and walking in his ways.

In order more fully to illustrate the nature of true resignation, and more clearly to exemplify what



ought to be the state of the human mind under this trial, it will be necessary to trace the progress of the humble individual whose character has been here described, one step farther on her path of patience and fortitude. For this purpose let us look in upon the childless widow in her solitude. Let us imagine her on the day following that of the funeral, solitary, but not inactive; for Alice busied herself with examining each article of the personal property which her son had left; and though her eyes were sometimes so dimmed with tears that she could hardly read the different labels he had placed upon all his school prizes, and his memorials of affection and early companionship, she still went on, leaving out whatever she thought might be more valuable to others than to herself; though it was a hard thing to part even with his wardrobe, now that she was so desolate and forlorn. This duty, moreover, was faithfully gone through, and Alice sat down to spend the evening alone; — alone, and without employment: for when she laid down her bible, and would have taken up her work, the thought that she had now no longer any one to work for, seemed to paralyze her fingers, and throw a chain of icy coldness upon every effort to rouse herself for active exertion.

It was not long, however, that Alice permitted her spirit to sink under the pressure of unmitigated affliction. “It is the will of my heavenly Father,” said she, “that I should bear my burden alone; and with his help I will not faint by the way; there



must yet be some field of usefulness open for me, or my soul would be required of me. I will still labour in his vineyard, though my strength should be as that of the bruised reed; I will still worship at his altar, though my only offering should be a broken heart."

With such feelings, strengthened into resolution by earnest and continual prayer, Alice set about to prepare for a change in her occupations and her place of abode. Having heard that a mistress was wanted for an infant school in a distant part of the country, she offered her services, and was appointed as a decent, useful looking woman, by those who thought they were conferring upon her a favour.

Here let us observe how little is known by those who flatter themselves they are dispensing favours — how very little is known of the misery which the necessity of being the object of them, sometimes inflicts upon the receiver: thus we complain of ingratitude, because our bounties are not seized with avidity, and acknowledged with delight; when in reality each act of beneficence, upon which we pride ourselves, has been gall and bitterness to those who were compelled by circumstances to accept it.

Alice had no natural inclination for the situation, nor for the line of life which she had chosen, and would rather have shrunk away from the arduous task which she had imposed upon herself; but it seemed more desirable to her to enter at once upon the field of active and imperative duties, than to leave

her inclination time to wander, and make its own selection amongst those which were merely optional. She, therefore, took her place amongst the little throng, and went diligently and faithfully through the whole process of instruction ; while visitors flocked in to see, and ladies made their comments, and the wonders and praises of the new establishment spread far and wide.

It was no difficult thing to discover that Alice was a trusty servant, and, as such, she was valued and approved : but no one knew what her heart had suffered, or was then suffering ; nor why, when the school was closing, she would often single out a little dark-haired boy, whose pale complexion and soft shadowy eyelashes gave him an air of melancholy and languor, and often, walking home with him to his mother's door, would stand there until she saw him comfortably seated at his own fireside, and then turn away to take a long solitary ramble by the seashore.

Yet the character of Alice Bland was not one that was capable of remaining long unknown. Though unobtrusive in her charities, and limited in her means, she was so unbounded in her desire to be useful, that neither time nor opportunity seemed wanting ; and it was a common reply with her, to the apologies of those who feared they might be making too great a claim upon her kindness, " Don't think of that. I am a lone woman. I have no ties at home, and therefore I am the more fit to be serviceable to others.

To him who has given me health and strength, and a few kind feelings, I have to render an account ; and blessed be his holy name, I am supported through every day by the consolations of his love. I am a weak instrument it is true ; but then there is the more need that I should diligently watch, and earnestly embrace every opportunity of offering my mite. It is not the magnitude of our good actions by which we hope to be saved ; it is the feelings from which they arise, and the spirit in which they are performed, that are the tests of obedience."

In this spirit, the spirit of Christian love, the poor widow persevered in the path of duty. Filled with this spirit, she laid aside all weak lamentations and fruitless repinings. Encouraged by this spirit, she kept perpetually in view the blessed goal, where she already beheld, in imagination, the souls of her departed, robed in white. Supported by this spirit, she became a prop to the feeble, and a comfort to the needy. Inspired by this spirit, she journeyed patiently along the pilgrimage of life, and was enabled, at the end, to lay down the burden of the flesh, rejoicing with the gladness of the captive who leaves his prison-house.



## MARRIAGE AS IT MAY BE.

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Yes, he deserves to find himself deceived,  
Who seeks a heart in the unthinking man.  
Like shadows on a stream the forms of life  
Impress their characters on the smooth forehead,  
Nought sinks into the bosom's silent depth ;  
Quick sensibility of pain and pleasure  
Moves the light fluids lightly ; but no soul  
Warmeth the inner frame.

WALLENSTEIN.

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## MARRIAGE AS IT MAY BE.\*

It is a common and popular plan, in writing what is called an autobiography, to account in some plausible manner for the way in which the pretended manuscript has fallen into the author's hands. On the present occasion, however, the picture that is presented to the public, offers so little either of the extraordinary or the marvellous, that it appears quite unnecessary to introduce it under any other character than that of a confidential communication from one lady to another.

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Painful as it may be to bequeath to posterity a record of our own errors, the heart that is deeply

\* The writer of this story would be sorry to draw upon herself the suspicion of having placed a worthless individual in the situation of a Clergyman of the Church of England, for the purpose of throwing an air of disrespect over that particular religious body. With creeds she holds no controversy,—for parties professes no preference. Her apology must be, that in painting from private life, she has delineated no traits of character which she has not seen, nor delinquency of conduct with which she has not been acquainted.



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interested in the well-being of society, will think the instruction of even one of the rising generation cheaply purchased by its own exposure.

To you, the friend of my early years, I submit this manuscript, with strict injunctions to keep it secret until I and mine shall have ceased to suffer the agonies of wounded feeling. You may not outlive us, or if you should, your judgment is now too mature, and your walk in life has ever been too circumspect for you to reap any advantage from my experience. But you have daughters; and may they read with charity, and wisely profit by the history which I am about to give, of that most lamentable of all calamities — most irreparable of all misfortunes, — an “ill assorted marriage.”

You who have shared in the pleasures and pursuits of my youth, are aware that my life was unmarked by any incident of sufficient interest to strike the attention of an impartial reader; notwithstanding I was distinguished for my quickness at school, and regarded as a prodigy of genius at home. Early deprived of the blessing of maternal care, and left at the age of sixteen to the unrestrained indulgence of my own tastes and caprices, I set about with the most voracious appetite, to feast upon that species of literature that was most in unison with a sensitive and undisciplined mind, and most conducive to the growth of that morbid melancholy which has followed me through life; restraining the aspirations of hope, weighing down the energies of resolution, and damp



ing the feeble fire of a lukewarm faith. In the spring-time of life, when the heart is most capable of enjoyment, I was consequently wretched. I was told reproachfully, that it was the absence of religion which made me so, and I began to "believe and tremble."

In my father's house we had no religious exercises. The gay and the worldly-minded sought our society, and with these I was constantly associated; until I felt like a being who is carried away against his inclination by the mere press of a crowd, with which he holds neither sympathy nor common feeling.

Amongst those who frequently sat at my father's table, was a young man of excellent disposition, whose light and easy manners won upon us all, and made him friends, for the moment, with every description of character that happened to be brought in contact with his own. He was undergoing the process of preparation for the church, though still but a boy, when we first met; but he had read poetry, and been taught at high schools, and flirted with a young widow; and just for present pastime was very much at my service, either as a butt, a lover, or a convert. As a butt, I first tried him, and found him the liveliest, wittiest, and best-tempered creature in the world; as a lover, I did not allow myself to ask what he might be; but as a convert,—I triumphed in the thought. Here was a field for my energies to work in. His good heart,—his habits of dissipation,—his deference for, and evidently growing attachment to myself,—what vain woman, building her eternal hopes upon

the frail reeds of self-righteousness, could resist a temptation like this? It was too much for me.

For some time I was made happy in the confidence that I should obtain the reward of having saved a "soul from sin;" for my promising protégé, though led away by gay companions, always came back to me in his hours of penitence; and a hopeful and interesting charge I had; until the hope, if not the interest, was somewhat abated, by my young friend proposing himself to me as my future husband.

I own I was at first a good deal surprised, that he who had always acknowledged such an immense inferiority on moral and religious grounds, should now esteem himself a fitting helpmate for me in the pilgrimage of life: but, forgiving the presumption of the boy in the flattery of the woman, I gently declined his proposals, pitied him, spoke of friendship, called myself his sister, and the thing went on as such things usually do.

All this while, however, my heart was ill at ease. I felt like one who goes into the field of battle, bearing the banner of his cause, without having learned to defend it. If we build our religion upon a false foundation, we make but a sorry edifice. Mine was a temple in which I found neither shelter nor repose, but rather a fantastic fabric, whose dizzy pinnacles threatened to fall and crush me in their ruins. Thus my days passed on. If I began to converse on religion, I often concluded by listening to love; and night invariably found me listless, weary, and unsa-

tified. My pupil, too, began to exhibit points of character, of which I had not before suspected him. There was a degree of wounded pride with which he listened to my repeated refusals to become his wife, that frequently urged him on to the manly revenge of determined inebriation; while many of my enemies, and some of my friends, wondered at, and blamed me for my intimacy with a being so unrestrained and desperate. Still it was no easy thing to break entirely asunder the chain which linked us together, for all his best hopes both for this world and the next seemed bound up with me; and I had the vanity to believe, that in casting him off, I should most probably consign him to everlasting perdition.

Surrounded by dangers and quicksands on every hand, it never once occurred to me that I was pursuing a wrong course; but still I determined to struggle through, though I felt myself plunging deeper and deeper at every fruitless attempt; and when time and experience brought me to my senses, it was too late to extricate myself from the difficulties in which I was involved. In this manner years passed away.—My lover was confirmed in his habits of dissipation, and my friends had some of them become enemies, loud in their declamations against me, though I observed, that whenever they had an opportunity of receiving his attentions, they were disposed to be anything but uncharitable towards him.

Disappointed in all my hopes, and hemmed in by difficulties, I endeavoured to seek from the only true

source, that help which I ought to have solicited at an earlier stage of my blind and foolish career. I believe I was sincere ; but, if I recollect right, I prayed more earnestly that I might be extricated from my present perplexities, than assisted to bend down my spirit in meekness and resignation, to the trials and troubles which followed as natural and inevitable consequences of the course I had chosen for myself.

You remember the tale of my being likely to marry a gentleman at that time residing abroad. It occupied a good deal of our thoughts and feelings ; but neither you nor any other of my friends knew the reasons which induced me to consent to such a step. As regards the individual, he did not interest me deeply, only as he was connected with my hopes of emancipation from the thralldom of evil. I believed, and still believe him to be an amiable character ; but there were circumstances connected with our separation which did not reflect much credit on his name. My friends, consequently, congratulated me, and said, I had had an escape ; while others laughed and said, I had had a disappointment. I tried to bear it with an air of philosophy, but all my efforts were vain. As regards the man, the case was comparatively neither aggravated nor cruel, for such things occur every day ; but from a Christian friend—from one in whose society I had hoped to find benefit and instruction, I felt the blow, and almost fancied that my God had forsaken me. I had been buoyed up with the prospect of a happy and lasting union with



one who would be willing and able to direct my steps aright, with what he persuaded me was a call to serious and imperative duties, away from the temptations which had long beset my path ; but now, my spirit was smitten down and prostrate in the midst of its own desolation.

I know not how it is, but there are times when affection wins upon us with tenfold power. I had been willing to leave my home connections, almost entirely for the sake of escaping from all association with him whose destiny seemed to be mysteriously linked with my own ; but he bore the alteration in my prospects so nobly, and then, when he found me left behind and neglected, came forward so generously with the same offer of faithful and unalterable attachment which I had so often rejected, that while my spirit writhed under the recent smart, while I fancied myself shut out from all help, either human or divine, I was the more reckless what I sacrificed for the sake of helping others, and in an evil hour I promised to become his wife.

Never shall I forget that day. It was in the month of December. A slight sprinkling of half-melted snow lay on the ground. A shrewd friend was staying with me, whose quick eye seemed to pierce into the secret recesses of my heart. "All things pertaining" to that time are written upon my memory, with a depth and distinctness not to be described ; for such was the agony to which my feelings were wrought, that I almost wondered how the common



affairs of human life could go on, without any one taking note of my calamity. But so it was.

I will not here trouble you with a relation of what took place preparatory to my melancholy union with one whose joy was beyond bounds, nor how keenly I felt the altered looks and constrained behaviour of those whom I knew to be in their hearts despising me. Had they spoken freely, I could have borne it better; for then there would have been something like a respite in their silence; but from this mute but perfectly intelligible kind of reproach, the heart has no intervals of relief; and I rejoiced at the coming of that day, after which I should be able to say to my conscience, "the Rubicon is now passed," I have no longer the power to return. It came at last; and I set off with my young husband to spend the honey-moon amongst the lakes and mountains of Cumberland.

After deliberately taking what we firmly believe to be a wrong step, we not unfrequently endeavour to console ourselves, and to quiet the whisperings of self-reproach, by doing double duty immediately afterwards; and, in this way, I diligently set about to work that reformation in my husband's heart and character, which I had promised myself should be the happy termination of my Christian labours.

For a short time every thing went on pleasantly enough, for we had no one to interrupt our gravity; his mind seemed willingly to take the tone of mine; and it was not difficult under such circumstances to

draw forth even from him, the often repeated quotation about looking

“ From Nature up to Nature’s God.”

The first sabbath that we spent was at a small town on the banks of one of the most picturesque lakes in this delightful country ; and here, thought I, we shall be able to acknowledge the sweet influence of peace, to enjoy communion with our own and each other’s hearts, and to worship in the house of God together.

Perhaps I need not own to you that the prospect of being the wife of a clergyman, was the most powerful reason for my consenting to become Mrs. Henry Wilton ; and the gravity and apparent attention with which I now saw my husband conduct himself during the service was a great solace to my heart. I had always considered that his high office would impose a wholesome restraint upon him, and that the respect he was accustomed to evince for the observances of religion, would draw him away from all evil communications. Alas ! I had never reflected, perhaps I had never observed, how frail, and worse than frail, are all outward observances, when the thoughts and feelings of an unsubdued nature are rioting within.

On our return from church we were met by a young man of no very promising aspect, who saluted my husband with the familiarity of a college-acquaintance, and I had the mortification of hearing a

cordial invitation for him to dine with us, as cordially accepted. Nay, he was even kind enough to join us in our ramble by the side of the lake, and when we called for a boat he very readily stepped in, and sat down beside us. It was not difficult to assign a character to my new acquaintance, a character more frequently found than admired; for although college slang was the only medium through which he condescended to convey his ideas, I understood enough, and more than enough, even from what was to me an unknown tongue. He was the son of a London silk mercer, and bore about with him the certificate of his pedigree so clearly stamped upon his countenance, that you could scarcely look at him without picturing his father, the keen tradesman, glancing over his ledger, and his aunts and cousins running about from house to house, and from neighbour to neighbour, collecting receipts for sweet cakes, gravies, and home made-wines. Not but that

“A man’s a man for a’ that.”

But the descendant of this noble house endeavoured to distinguish himself by talking about the *οι πολλοι*,\* and swearing at waiters, and looking big at inns, for

\* For an unlearned writer to make use of a Greek word, may well be thought a piece of unpardonable presumption; but surely the same apology may be repeated — that of painting from private life — from the number of young men in the middle classes of society, who think that a college education entitles them to make use of this expression to distinguish themselves from the *common people*.

he was evidently unacquainted with any other kind of greatness. At such a time, and in such a place, I could scarcely have been brought into contact with a being more repulsive to me, and what made his society infinitely more intolerable was, to see my husband completely led out of his better self, sharing in the vulgar volubility of this heartless, mindless, mockery of a man.

Relieved by anything which brought a change, I was glad to return to the inn, and here, while the pleasures of the table were prolonged, I was compelled to listen to often-repeated and common-place encomiums on my husband's good taste, interrupted only by the good taste of the viands, and the different wines in which they both appeared deeply interested. In fact they were dining so much to their mutual satisfaction, that I felt no scruple in making my exit at a very early period of the entertainment, informing my husband as I passed him, that I should spend the evening upon the water.

"Take care of yourself," said he, with many of those endearing expressions which people are wont to use when their hearts are not entirely with you, "and we will join you in the course of half an hour."

There are few things that make a plain man look plainer than an expression about the face which reminds you of dinner and wine, and when I turned away from the door of the apartment, but more especially when on passing it again, I heard peals of laughter from within, I could not help wishing with



a sigh, that it was possible to love my husband better.

The book which I selected for the companion of my rambles, was Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and in these delightful pages I lost myself for a while, carried away, as it were, from the realities of earth, up to a higher sphere of intellectual and pure enjoyment. From some inexplicable cause, however, as if the chain of imagination had snapped asunder, I suddenly awoke to the full consciousness of my own situation. Above me was an almost cloudless sky, with the sun gradually declining towards his golden couch, far in the west. Around me was the magnificence of nature; the summits of the mountains bathed in radiance; and nearer, the woods, and islands, and grassy slopes, clothed with summer's richest drapery; while all were reflected in the glassy mirror of the peaceful water, over which I was silently gliding; and in the midst of this region of repose and loveliness, what was I?

As a being created for immortality, and endued with feelings, and powers, and capabilities of a high and intellectual nature, I dared not contemplate the yoke to which I had just submitted myself; and as a Christian, accountable to an unerring and Almighty Judge, the thought was still more dreadful. Despicable and disgusting pictures of the future presented themselves to my mind; degrading associations, low thoughts, and gloomy forebodings fell upon me with a deadly weight; until with the feeling that they



were rapidly becoming more than I could bear, and glad of any thing that might divert me from myself, I told the boatman to row me back to the shore, almost unconscious of what I either said or did.

Here I was not met, as I had anticipated, and I sauntered on, solitary, and musing, not unfrequently stopping to admire the flowery gardens, and the pretty cottages wreathed all over with garlands of beauty. The scent of innumerable roses, the freshness of the air, the exercise, the sight of happy and healthy faces, and the many social groups gathered together in the fond enjoyment of a day of rest, brought me back to something like a sense of pleasure; and I returned to the inn just as the afternoon was waning into evening, quite disposed to make the best of every thing.

With this determination I opened the door of the dining-room, not doubting but I should find my husband overjoyed at my return.

May I ask you, my friend, if you have ever gone suddenly from the pure atmosphere of a summer's day, from the fanning of the breezes that play over the lake, and sport with the spray of the waterfall, and dance upon the tops of the mountains, and sleep in the valleys amongst bowers of rose-leaves; have you ever gone suddenly from the freshness of such enjoyment, into a dining-room that has not been opened for three hours after dinner? Now this was exactly what I did on the afternoon of a Sabbath day, after sailing on the lake, and reading Milton.

And there sat my husband with a flushed and dizzy look—not certainly intoxicated—he would have been horror-struck at the thought, but with all that was most gross and despicable in his nature laid bare upon his brow. Not intoxicated certainly; but just so much deranged by the lowest kind of excitement, that he had almost entirely lost his self-possession, and that lively tact with which he could sometimes play off on assumed part; and thus, when he declared that he had been ten times down to the water to look for me, he betrayed himself by a knowing wink at his companion, which seemed to say, “This is the way to manage a wife.”

Long and intimate association with evil has somewhat seared my natural feelings to that quick sense of transgression on the part of others, which I once had, yet not so entirely but that I have a vivid recollection of the intense agony I suffered from the repetition of this falsehood, trifling as it was in every respect, except that of its own base nature.

Of all that comes across our path in the rough and varied journey of life, there can be nothing more deadly and dissevering to the social affections which bind us to each other, than the first falsehood. When the trusting and unpractised youth goes forth into the world, fresh from the shelter of the paternal home, and strong in the early instilled principles of truth, perhaps he is consigned to the oversight, and protection of the avaricious, or the worldly-minded, and here he learns for the first time—learns with horror

and dismay, that in order to maintain what is called a respectable standing in society, to combat with the difficulties, the competitions, and the tricks of trade, to obtain "that bread which perisheth," it is thought necessary by mankind in general, to deceive, evade, and circumvent, and too frequently to sacrifice entirely the fair principles of honest dealing. Let me ask, whether, after such daily contemplation of the lowest prostration of the human soul, he would not at times be willing to give all his acquired possessions to be able to return to the innocence of his early years, and to feel again the confidence with which he could once sit down and look around him in simplicity and peace, before his ear was startled by the first falsehood?

It is not so much the direct character of a lie to which I am now alluding, though hateful, and vile, and sinful in itself; it is its direful consequences, felt as they are, not only in the inner chambers, the secret recesses of the heart, but on through all the chain of human fellowship, to the extremest boundaries which separate man from the brute creation. Nor is the first falsehood a stain that can be soon wiped off; an error that can be easily redeemed. The best atonement we can make to each other, is a free acknowledgment of our transgression; but even after this, we see, and feel that we are "fallen from our high estate," from the safe ground which we occupied in the affections of those around us.

Can the wife ever ask counsel again of the husband

of her choice, after she has detected him in the first falsehood? Can the husband ever look again with perfect satisfaction upon the countenance of his wife, after the first falsehood has polluted her lips? Alas! no! A barrier has been broken down, and the waves of sin and sorrow roll in upon their paradise of domestic enjoyment.

When the mother looks into the face of her child, and sees there, instead of the sweet open confidence of truth, the bright eye cast down with shame, and the rosy lip trembling beneath its burden of deceit, her heart faints within her, as she beholds for the first time "the trail of the serpent" amidst the loveliness of her own Eden. And oh! if she to whom belongs this holy name, could even dare to violate by falsehood the sanctity of her high title, I could almost think, that not only the besom of destruction would sweep away the happy circle from her hearth, but that her guardian angel, thenceforth abandoning his trust, would bear the melancholy tidings up to the highest heaven, where the cherubs that wing their happy flight around the throne, would veil their faces and weep.

But to return to my story. I need hardly say that after the scene I have described, I had little satisfaction in rambling through the delightful country in which I had promised myself so much enjoyment; for it was easy to see that my husband was not exactly in his element, and that his heart went not along with me in my admiration of the beauties of



nature, whether simple or sublime; we therefore cut short our sentimental tour, and turned our course towards our future home, where, from the anxiety which he evinced to enter upon his pastoral duties, I felt confident I should see his character exhibited in a more favourable point of view. I did not then know that the opportunity of displaying a bombastic sort of eloquence upon which he prided himself, was the grand charm which these duties possessed; and that the soundness and safety of a favourite hunter, upon which he had made some tremendous bets, were of more importance to him than the study of cloud-capped mountains, silvery lakes, rich verdant woods, and foaming waterfalls.

The home upon which I entered had every thing in its appearance both within and without, to invite a weary spirit to repose; and I sat down, well pleased to be the mistress of a parsonage house. My husband, naturally kind-hearted, was delighted with my evident satisfaction, and in this frame of mind he readily agreed to a variety of rules, and stipulations, which I proposed to him for the future regulation of our domestic economy. Amongst these, I insisted upon our never visiting or receiving visitors on a Saturday; for in a situation high and important as his, I thought it necessary to have that day exclusively devoted to preparation for the Sabbath; and as all his occupations were painfully prolonged by indolence and procrastination, I found it difficult enough, even with my assistance, to accomplish the



concoction of a sermon on the following day. It was completed however, grammatically arranged and put together, (for I cannot say that we composed it) by one o'clock on Sunday morning, and at half-past nine my husband crept down stairs in his slippers to a cold breakfast, which had been waiting for him more than an hour. His rings, his dress, were scrupulously selected and arranged, and his white bands lay smooth under his chin; but there was no smoothness on his brow, for he knew and felt that he was too late, and that every one was thinking him so; a feeling well calculated to ruffle the countenance, as well as the temper, prompting to a childish peevishness and petty revenge upon shoe-strings, hot coffee, grooms, horses, and wives. Of course we had no time for family prayer, a duty which we had decided the day before should never be interfered with by any other consideration. Nor indeed could I have well endured such a mockery in my lord and master's present state of mind; so we set off together with a spirited well-fed horse, enlivened all the way by rearing, prancing, driving, and slashing over a dirty high road. It was but a short distance to the village church, which stood embowered in a beautifully wooded valley, but the Rev. Henry Wilton esteemed it derogatory to his importance to be seen walking over the green fields, through which we might have passed by a cool, pleasant, and much shorter way.

On entering the church, where the congregation had already been waiting some time, I observed my

husband slacken his pace, and assume an air of ten-fold majesty, that was but little in keeping with his juvenile appearance, and the jocund air, and playful manner, which he seemed formed to wear.

“ Oh ! wad some power the giftie gie us,  
To see ourselves as others see us ”—

thought I, as he ascended the steps of the pulpit ; and then, when I tried to turn my attention to more serious things, there came, instead of the ridiculous, images that were still more repulsive, and texts of scripture presented themselves, burdened with deep and poignant reproof, such as “ They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept ; ” so that, although the service was got through with tolerably well, I felt that I, at any rate, had not been ministered unto, and hoped that others had been more favoured. Without having added one mite to that peace of mind which I so much needed, I turned away from the house of prayer, where, for any edification that I had received, there might as well have been the “ tables of the money changers, and them that sold doves.” However, it was a gratification to my natural vanity, to be the well-dressed wife of a clergyman, and I lifted high my head, taking care to bend it occasionally with graceful condescension to the poor and needy, as I passed them by.

What a strange compound is our nature ! when we do not acknowledge, nay, we hardly feel our own

want of all rational, substantial, and healthy support, so long as we can wear the trappings of greatness, and the world does not look in and see the emptiness beneath. And yet, we scarcely live through a single day, sometimes not through a single hour, without pointing at the abuses, the inconsistencies, the fallibilities, the abominations of that world, from which we are at the same time concealing our faults, even the most trifling, by every possible subterfuge, and evasion; sparing neither time nor trouble, cost nor comfort, pains nor patience, to accomplish our purpose. Nor do we ever kneel down in prayer, open our bibles, or converse on holy themes, without acknowledging the justice, the purity, and the omnipotence of that power, before whose all-seeing eye we dare deliberately to violate the laws which he has laid down for the merciful government of his creatures.

Amongst the numerous visitors who came on an early day to pay their compliments to the bride, were a Mr. and Mrs. Ormorand, whose appearance and manners were well calculated to excite a wish to cultivate their acquaintance. Mr. Ormorand was a gentleman without business, living genteelly upon a small income, which, with good management, was just sufficient to afford every rational gratification to an humble, yet philosophic mind; and Mrs. Ormorand was in all things a fitting wife for such a character. In their society I found all that I most wanted at home, but I soon discovered that my hus-

band's natural and undisguised antipathy to intellectual and scientific pursuits, in short, to any thing that required the least exercise of mind, was very likely to become something like hatred of the individuals who thus possessed the power of throwing him and his small attainments into shade. Not that he was altogether ignorant or illiterate. In many of the popular works of the day he was well versed, as well as in magazines, and reviews belonging to the party for which, as a staunch supporter of church and state, he professed a sort of boisterous attachment. Besides, he had an excellent memory, and could spout pompous passages from plays; often, when I wished to talk seriously, going off as Othello, upsetting the chairs and tables in the thundering rant of King Richard, and subsiding into the majestic madness of old Lear. But this was nothing for my private gratification, (still less was it in public,) and then, as to the wonders of the animal kingdom, the varieties of climate, the study of plants, minerals, and fossils, as well as the history of the creation in general, he was so thoroughly and blindly ignorant, that he had scarcely patience to listen with common civility when such were the subjects of conversation in his presence. I had, it is true, observed this peculiarity long before I married, but then he had such a lively and humorous manner of turning the discourse, such a burlesque way of appearing, if possible, more ignorant than he really was, that the importance of his deficiencies was lost in the enter-



tainment they afforded. But two people confined to each other's company, hour after hour, and day after day, grow weary of their own jokes ; and when this amusement was entirely vanished from our fire side, I felt a miserable blank which I would gladly have filled up, as far as I could, by the society of Mr. and Mrs. Ormorand. But this unfortunate partiality of mine for my literary and intellectual friends, was a constant source of strife and contention, not unfrequently terminating in deliberate and determined inebriety on the part of my husband. They were, besides, dissenters, and all dissenters were, in his opinion, low-bred people, so that it was almost an act of rebellion whenever I sought the comfort of their social circle. Here, however, I was accustomed to meet with that enlargement of feeling which extends, in the fellowship of brotherly love, to all the community of Christ, that charity which "hopeth all things," that philosophy which bows before religion, and brings forward the treasures of earth, ocean, and air, to magnify the glory of their Creator.

To deprive myself of the advantage of such associations was an act of greater self-denial than I felt equal to ; but I paid dearly for my short-lived enjoyment.

In due time, however, the hunting season came, and then my husband had sufficient animal stimulus to supply him with good humour even for the Ormorands, and we went on peaceably for a while, each following the bent of our different inclinations. With the hunting season came its worst accompaniments,



dinner parties, and drinking ; if not to actual brutality, yet to an excess that was far beyond my powers of toleration. On such occasions I was accustomed to shut myself up in my own chamber ; but even here my senses were stunned, and my feelings shocked, by the shouts and the loud peals of vulgar laughter that issued from the dining-room.

How was it possible, after such days as these, to call in the domestics for evening prayer ? and in the morning the aspect of things was so little better, that in time the custom was laid aside altogether ; and we, who stood at the head of a clergyman's household, might truly have acknowledged to ourselves, and to each other, that we were not in a fit state to engage in the duty of family prayer.

Wounded, weary, and disappointed, I now sought the society of the Ormorands more for a sort of fascination which it possessed, than for any solid satisfaction which it afforded ; indeed, had I weighed my feelings on returning home, I believe the balance would have been on the side of misery ; the comparison was so dreadful, so heart-rending, so utterly devoid of all consolation. I had no pursuits ; for, galled and fretted as I was, and bound up for life with a character so uncongenial, the mind loses the energy to pursue anything, and stagnates in despair. There was but one hope for me. To pull down the religion I had built up for myself, and erect another edifice upon the true foundation ; but this was going to the root of the matter in a way I had never dreamed

of, and I still continued to recoil from my bitter portion, without studying or soliciting the means of rendering it more palatable. It seemed to me, in this state of mind, that no creature upon the face of the earth was so wretched as myself; and I often compared my situation, surrounded by comforts which I could not enjoy, to that of him who was doomed to perpetual thirst in the midst of water of which he was unable to drink.

If the mornings which took my husband to the field were the happiest of my life, the evenings of these days were the most miserable; for just at that hour (the grey twilight of a winter's evening), when those who enjoy domestic comforts gather in to the social circle, and draw around them the blessed influence of peace and love, I used to sit solitary and musing, waiting the tread of a tired hunter along the gravel walk beneath my window; and then the noisy entrance of a blustering man, calling with impatience for his dinner, to which he would sit down without either grace or gratitude; and when his keen appetite was a little abated, came the luxury of recounting his "glorious leaps," and magnificent exploits, added to that of drinking my health, with the health of any other person, man, woman, or child, who might "prove an excuse for the glass;" and then followed the deadly stupor of exhausted animal nature, with the heavy eyelids closed, and the whole face stiffened into the stupidity of sleep.

It is true I cannot pay myself the compliment of

saying that I endeavoured to make the best of these opportunities, to struggle against the disgust that was fast gaining upon the tardy growth of my affections, or to bring down my understanding to enquire whether my own internal pride of heart and want of charity, and neglect of duty, might not be as culpable in the sight of Heaven, as those grosser vices at which I felt so indignant. No ! I made no such appeal to reason, no such inquiry of conscience, but have often sat for hours lost in a fruitless reverie, with no other sound to cheer me than the deep breathing of a weary huntsman, while my eyes were fixed upon the red embers of an unstirred fire—unstirred, because I was unwilling to break the repose of a sleep which, however annoying in itself, afforded me a respite from that which was still more so ; and in these dreamy hours what retrospections came back upon my heart ! bringing again the sweet picture of my father's house, the voices of my sisters when we were happy girls at home, the fields where we used to play, the books we read together, and more than these, the fresh buoyancy of feeling, never, never to be recalled.

How far my husband's character might have been improved by studious care, and well-directed kindness, I am not able to say, for I acknowledge with shame and compunction, that this was a trial which I never made. Having trusted to his promises as a lover, I was piqued and wounded by his failure as a husband, and disappointed in no small degree on

discovering, that neither my influence, my wishes, nor my example, were sufficient to win him over to a change of heart. As if there could possibly be more potency in the charming of a weak-woman, than in the daily experience of the unsatisfactory nature of mere animal enjoyment, the force of early instruction, and the conviction of natural reason.

Of all those human infatuations which stand forth in glaring and palpable mockery of nature, and experience, and common sense, none can be more blind and fatally delusive, than that which leads a vain woman to believe, that by marrying a vicious man, she shall be able to turn him from the error of his ways. It is true he may promise well. Nay, he may sometimes even believe his own words. But let her look to the talent that has been committed to her care, to her own little garden of weeds and wandering plants, to the soil untilled, and the fruit unripened, and ask of her own heart, where is the proof of the watchfulness, labour, and skill, necessary for the cultivation of the wide desert that has been laid waste by the spoiler. While her own scanty harvest tells too truly of careless husbandry, it would be daring presumption to wish to encrease her responsibility, and if she had indeed been faithful over that which was committed to her, she would shrink from the unequal yoke, the fellowship unholy, of him who had not learned to love the institutes of religion.

Mr. and Mrs. Ormorand possessed that true liberality of feeling which delights to unite different



denominations of Christians in one sacred bond of social union, esteeming all equally who partake of the spirit of their Heavenly Master.

In their society I was accustomed to meet a Lady St. Lewis, the wealthy patroness of an active and popular party in the religious world. Accustomed to lead and direct, she moved about with the majesty of a queen, and I own it was difficult for me to believe that true heartfelt humility could dwell beneath such an exterior. But my friends assured me that she was most devoted and persevering in her endeavours to do good, "and if," said they, "we look for so much energy and zeal without the least mixture of evil, we must extend our views beyond this world. It is for us to rejoice that we have amongst us a distinguished female, who accounts it no stigma upon her birth and station, to stand forward in the cause of religion."

Perhaps the strict sectarian views of this lady might be one reason why she always assumed a double share of hauteur in her communications with me, nor was it possible for me to remain uninfluenced by this pointed manner, so well calculated to establish between us a sort of precise, cold, good behaviour, which I should have been sorry indeed to infringe upon by the least touch of familiarity.

With my husband she held no intercourse. How would it now have been possible for beings so differently constituted, to meet on any common ground? Indeed they seldom met at all, except when he had



good humour enough to come for me at night, and drive me home ; and then the starched air, and impenetrably close shut lips of Lady St. Lewis, sufficiently indicated her sense of contamination to be dreaded from such society. She was of all persons the one in whose presence you would most dislike to be guilty of a breach of good manners, or to give cause, by any kind of failure on your part, for what you more than suspected would be internal triumph on hers. With these feelings I always met her, and was truly thankful when I could say "good night," without having had my husband's conduct as well as my own to answer for.

There came at last, however, a sudden termination to our slight and unsatisfactory intercourse. It was a memorable evening. Lady St. Lewis and I never met again.

We were seated, in our usual manner, around Mr. Ormorand's hospitable hearth, he, who was properly the head of his family, expatiating upon that most interesting subject of discussion, (a subject which so few can treat with candour and coolness,) the difference of creeds, and the peculiarities of religious opinions : I, with my hands ever unoccupied, reclined upon a chair opposite the fire, and Lady St. Lewis was seated erect upon the sofa, stiff and strong in the dignity of a "well-grounded and orthodox belief;" while at her side was Miss Robinson, a young girl with meek brow and braided hair, who occupied the dubious and unenviable post of poor relation; an

humble friend, an untiring responder, and a faithful supporter of her ladyship's arguments.

"I regard it, said Mr. Ormorand, as a great blessing, a blessing for which we ought all to be unfailingly thankful, that in consideration to the weakness, the inconstancy, and the manifold wants of our nature, we are permitted to hold different shades of opinion, to adopt different modes of worship, suited to the natural tone of our minds, and to meet at last where all these slight distinctions are merged into one bond of everlasting union.

"Let it be remembered," continued he, "amongst the mercies of which we daily partake, that we dwell in a land where our worship, whatever form it wears, may be lifted up in the face of mankind without fear, or shame, or danger, to that throne which our less privileged forefathers not unfrequently addressed, in secret and sorrow, from the abodes of infamy, within prison walls, and amidst the horrors of martyrdom."

Just at the close of this sentence we were all startled by a thundering knock at the door.

"Who can this be?" exclaimed Mrs. Ormorand. But I spoke not, for I knew too well. It was my husband. I heard his step coming with an uneven sledgey sound along the floor of the hall. One look was sufficient. With an elaborate attempt at more than common propriety, he addressed Mrs. Ormorand, and then turning to Lady St. Lewis, bowed so low that I began to fear he would never recover himself, but he did at last regain that erect posture which is

so valuable a distinction between man and the brute; and having done this, he seated himself, with great complacency, beside me.

What can it be, which, on such occasions, seems to give tenfold intensity to the organs of sense and perception. In spite of my determination not to see anything, I beheld every body's eyes, and caught all the enquiring glances by which they appeared to ask of each other,—“What can be the matter?” And deaf as I would gladly have been, (deaf as the rocks to the drowning seaman,) I distinctly heard Miss Robinson whisper to her aunt, “The man is intoxicated,” while the indignant lady drew her niece closer to her elbow and shook the full folds of her dress, as she gathered it round her feet, away from all chance of contamination.

It seemed that others were not quite so much alive to the true state of things as I was myself, for good Mrs. Ormorand, always endeavouring to set every one at ease, addressed my husband on the common topics of the weather, the roads, and the moon; while he, having just sense enough to perceive that he had made a breach in our conversation, begged we would proceed.

“Let me see,” said he, with a sprightliness intended to be very captivating, “I dare say you were talking about bible societies, or Sunday schools. Do you know, Mrs. Ormorand, there is nothing I doat upon like Sunday schools.”

“Perhaps,” replied this excellent manager of mis-

chances, "you will have the goodness to add to the collection I am just now making for our annual rewards."

"With all the pleasure in the world," exclaimed he, who was nominally the patron of the institution.

Thinking the tide was now setting in more favourably, I ventured to raise my eyes, and saw him fumble a sovereign out of his purse, and present it to Mrs. Ormorand.

"So far so good," thought I; and my pulse beat slower. Encouraged by this appearance of sanity, Mr. Ormorand commenced again with the conversation which had been so suddenly interrupted, and addressing himself politely to my husband, "We have been endeavouring," said he "to reconcile the slight differences in our religious belief, by considering the advantage which is thus afforded to the union of a variety of characters in one great cause; and you, Sir, I am sure, as a gentleman of liberal mind, as well as a warm supporter —

"A supporter, Sir," said my husband, springing upon his feet, and placing his hands upon the back of a chair, with all the mock majesty of a public speaker, while he thundered forth, with a voice which brought the domestics to the door to listen, "A supporter, Sir, of that church, Sir, whose institutions I venerate, whose laws I uphold, and whose unsullied purity I set forth: of that state, Sir, whose king I obey, to whose loyal subjects I offer my right hand, and of whose aristocracy, I am happy to say, that I make one, Sir."

“ Shew me the man, Sir, whose heart does not glow with indignation when he hears a base calumny against the church, Sir, that church which has flourished through ages, in the unassailed and unassailable power of her saint-like sublimity. Show me, this man, Sir, and I will strike him with my foot. Show me Sir, the traitor who dares to harbour in his soul, not only the remotest thought, but the smallest iota of an idea derogatory to the majesty, and the might, and the magnificence of his sovereign, and I will shed my best blood, Sir, in uprooting him from the earth. Show me again, Sir, the man, woman, or child, who is base enough to submit to the degradation of dissent from that most holy, most venerable, most mighty, most grand, — most, — most — every thing of all institutions ; and I will hiss, Sir, I will hiss as I do now ;” and he actually pointed his finger full in the face of Lady St. Lewis, and prolonged the hissing sound, until we had all time to grow stiff in the attitude of amazement.

To relate circumstantially what followed would be impossible. I had wondered until my astonishment was exhausted, I had felt until feeling was worn out, I had endured until the power of endurance was no more ; I lost all susceptibility of impressions, and can recollect nothing after this scene except a confused call for carriages, in which Lady St. Lewis and my husband both insisted upon being first. Her ladyship, however, gained the point in starting, but my worthy Nimrod soon drove past her with a yell of triumph,



which made her coachman start upon his seat, and draw his horses off the road, as if to make way for a madman.

The week which followed this scene of absurdity was one of unbroken sullenness on the part of the offender, and of something very much of the same kind on mine, interrupted only by occasional tart and taunting allusions to the gross effrontery of such conduct.

When the morning of Saturday arrived, no change for the better had taken place, and it was with evident satisfaction that my husband informed me of an engagement he had made for that day, to dine with a neighbouring gentleman, who was more celebrated for his wine than his wisdom. Now was the time for me to exert my influence, if I had any, to lay aside all petulant airs, and to shew by the sacrifice of my own wounded pride, how sincere was my desire to promote the interest of that cause, for which I had once been so solicitous, that the day before the Sabbath should be devoted to the services of religion. But no. I could not, at least I would not, bring down my spirit to remind my husband of his duty; for it was impossible to do this, without at the same time recalling the past days when I had been humble enough to make a favour of his concessions; and in the present state of my temper nothing could have been more galling than to make the acknowledgment, that such a being, so lost to common sense, and common decency, so prone to grovel in his own egregious folly, could possibly confer a favour upon me.

I saw him linger even beyond his usual time of trifling, I saw him come back into the house before he mounted his horse, and even turn again as he passed the window ; but I made no answer either by look or sign to his evident desire to be recalled, and casting off the last weak longing after better things, he gave himself up to one desperate resolution, and set spurs into his high-mettled steed, the sound of whose galloping hoofs died away upon my ear, as I sat in silent self-condemnation, musing upon the opportunity I had thus perversely thrown away. In spite of the many times I told myself during the day that I had only done what every other woman of spirit would do, my heart was ill at ease ; and when I sat down to my solitary tea, I thought of the riotous board, where, at that very hour, my husband was drowning all recollection of the past, and what was still worse, all anticipation of the future. In vain I endeavoured to console myself by saying it would have been of no use even if I had endeavoured to detain him. Beneath the all-seeing eye of Omnipotence, how futile is this plea, when no attempt has been made, not a finger stirred, not a word spoken, at the very moment when a still small voice was whispering " Now is the appointed time."

Oh ! that we would be satisfied to fulfil our simple part, and to leave the event in His hands " with whom are the issues of life !"

Had I, in the hour of trial, submitted to the dictates of duty, I might, even on this most miserable

evening of my life, have found some drops of sweetness in my cup ; for then I could have lifted up my heart in prayer with the consciousness of having done my best ; and I too might have uttered the touching and impressive language “ though he slay me yet will I trust in him.” But now, with a smitten and writhing spirit, I applied myself to the painful task of preparing a sermon for the next day’s service.

Hour after hour passed on, and the Sabbath came apace ; but he who was to spread forth the tidings of the gospel to a listening people was still at his unhallowed revels. At deep midnight I opened my window and listened, and again, and again, until the grey dawn appeared in the east, and the birds stretched forth their buoyant wings, and all nature awoke in freshness, and beauty, and peace. At last I heard the sound of a horse, right welcome as it came before the domestics were abroad. I opened the door as gently as I could, and the brisk morning air brought a touch of gladness on its wings.

The worst confirmation of our fears is a relief to the agony of suspense, the torture of apprehension ; and yet, when I saw my husband staggering home with all that disorder of look and manner which remains after such a day, or rather such a night as he had spent, and when I thought that in a few hours he must appear in public as a minister of a pure and holy religion, my heart sunk within me, and oh ! what bitter self-upbraidings were mine, that I had done nothing, attempted nothing, to rescue him from

such an exposure, to spare that church which I professed to venerate, the stain of such a disgrace.

If it be true that a man when intoxicated always exhibits his natural disposition, my husband must have been gifted with an uncommon share of obstinacy; for when in this state it was impossible to divert him, still less to force him, from any absurd determination he might take up. It was consequently vain for me to attempt to convince him that he would be unable to go through with the usual service of the day, and when I proposed to send over to a neighbouring clergyman and ask him to take his duty for the morning, he replied with indignation that he wanted no interference with his duties.

What could be done in such a case! Once I thought of sending for Mr. Ormorand, but knowing my husband's antipathy to him and his family, I dared not even pronounce his name, lest it should occasion some terrible explosion of rage.

With that sickness of soul which makes the hand tremble, and the knees grow weak, and the brain reel with giddiness, I prepared to accompany my husband to church. But it was in vain. My resolution failed me, and while he was adjusting the reins, I stepped back into the house saying that I did not feel well enough to go.

Had the prayers of my heart that morning been offered up in the spirit of true humility, I have little doubt but they would have been heard and accepted. Most assuredly they were wrung out from a broken,

if not from a contrite, spirit ; but even in the agony of my feelings I can well remember that I drew many conclusions about what certain individuals would think, and had much to combat with in my own mind, besides the overwhelming idea of the mockery which might, at that very time, be offered to the throne of mercy.

Absorbed in these gloomy reflections, I was seated with my eyes wandering over the garden, the fields, and the fair prospect before me ; when, long before the usual time for leaving church, I saw my husband led home, leaning on the arm of Mr. Ormorand. I could not meet them at the door, but stood up to receive them in the room, where I had spent the last tedious and comfortless hour, like a culprit who awaits his final sentence.

“ Tell me the worst,” said I, seizing the hand of Mr. Ormorand, who told me nothing, but shook his head and answered gravely and evidently with great distress, “ This will not do.”

“ Do not leave me,” said I, for I felt utterly helpless, and destitute of all comfort ; and, bursting into an agony of tears, I entreated him to tell me all the fearful truth, for nothing could be worse than my apprehensions.

The case was indeed bad enough, yet not so glaring, but that many of the congregation were left to believe that my husband had been taken ill. What added peculiar poignancy to my distress, was to discover that, from a kind and delicate regard to my



feelings, and the shock they must have received on the evening of the terrible rupture with Lady St. Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. Ormorand, had left their usual place of worship, and attended our church that morning, with the generous intention of convincing me that they, at least, could look charitably upon my husband's conduct. But this was a breach of propriety, a violation of all moral and religious feeling, for which they could find no palliation; and it was evident, that the calm and well-regulated mind of Mr. Ormorand had been deeply shocked and wounded.

"This must never be repeated," said he, as we walked together in the garden. "It is worth any sacrifice of private peace to prevent"—he did not say what, but went on. "You must labour diligently and faithfully, and if your best endeavours cannot overcome this dreadful propensity, I entreat you then to apply all your energies, all your zeal, to induce your husband voluntarily to resign a situation, from which he must in time be expelled." And thus, with many strict charges respecting my own vigilance and care, he left me; and I turned into my own habitation on the noon of a smiling sabbath, when the cottager goes home from the house of prayer; and all who value the privileges of a Christian community, acknowledge with thankfulness and joy the welcome influence of a day of bodily rest, and spiritual refreshment. I turned in to my own habitation, to sit down with a husband, whose senses, half drowned by recent intoxication, were still dense and brutalized, and

whose very countenance, retaining the mark of the beast, was flushed, and distorted with fever, and burning thirst.

Now, my friend, I believe you have had experience enough in the deceitfulness of the world, more especially have seen enough of that worst kind of deception by which we endeavour to impose upon ourselves, to lead you to join with me in deprecating the false delicacy by which women are accustomed to blind themselves to the true nature of vice. Thus we speak of a gentleman, being gay, being under the excitement of wine, being good-hearted, but a little dissipated, an enemy to no one but himself; and thus we marry the creatures whom we pity for such gentle errors, when we think we would not for the world unite ourselves to a vicious, a drunken, or a bad man. Not that I would in any way imply that, because of our own exemption from glaring vices, we should look with uncharitable eye upon those whose temptations may have been incalculably more powerful than ours; but oh! what weight, what dignity would be added to the character of woman, if, when speaking of mankind, she would raise her mind above that network of nonsense which is used in polished society, to throw a veil over those vices which cry aloud for our deepest, our most fervent, most persevering reprobation. I could draw a picture of what a gay man is in private life, but which of my fair sisters would not turn away her eyes, and say it was impossible that her Lothario should ever resemble that.

But enough of this. I wish not to expose my poor husband's transgressions more than is necessary for warning others from risking the same rash experiment, which plunged me into the deepest despair; and while I speak fairly of his character, I desire to treat my own with the same candour, and to prove that whatever his undisguised errors, or even sins might be, they were more than balanced by those which I endeavoured to conceal within my own heart; by the unpardonable presumption which led me on to undertake his conversion, having never made my own "calling and election sure;" by the rebellious and unsubdued pride in which I refused to fulfil the only conditions which could produce a favourable change; and by the contempt with which I looked down from my own fancied elevation upon his lost and fallen state.

Severely, deeply, as my feelings were harrowed by this last exposure, I still adopted no conciliatory measures, nor condescended to enter upon an impartial examination of the root of the evil.

The next morning, I will venture to say, did not rise upon any creature more wretched than myself. I awoke with an indistinct sense of something impending over me, something dreadful, that would happen, or had already happened, and scarcely could the severest calamity that words might describe have been so intolerable in its oppressiveness as that universal yet indefinite kind of desolation which was made sufficiently evident to my fully awakened thoughts.

“What am I, where am I, and what do I possess?” are three appalling questions which we not unfrequently ask ourselves on first awaking from a long and heavy sleep. I had no answer by which to allay the anguish of my heart, and when I arose, it was but to take up again the weary burden of the past day.

Under the pressure of affliction in which no one can partake, and which we imagine nothing can alleviate, we do not beguile the time by tracing our accustomed walks in grounds or gardens, but seek either the city or the solitude, the crowd or the wilderness; because in both situations we feel ourselves equally unobserved. In this state of mind I chose out for myself a melancholy retreat, where neither my husband nor my domestics were likely to find me. It was in a wild and untrimmed plantation, where the grounds of the parsonage were bounded by a brook that murmured perpetually over a gravelly bed.—There was no beauty in this scene except what the little brook and the wild weeds gave it; yet here I used to sit on the moss-covered stem of a fallen tree, envying the very birds, and the insects that winged their flight around and above me. Even winter could not keep me from this spot, for I loved its withered grass, and bright green moss, and silvery lichen; but most of all, I loved to listen to the blast that roared amongst its leafless boughs.

Here I was one day indulging the full bent of my distempered fancy, until at last my thoughts broke forth in words.

"Everything in nature," said I, "has some purpose to fulfil, some power to exercise, some impulse to obey, but me. I alone, of all creation, live on from day to day, in a perpetual imprisonment of soul.—Why, why was I ever animated with human life, when the very worm has an existence more enviable than mine? The simplest denizen of air may 'flee away and be at rest;' the birds have their unwearied wings to bear them to a distant land: and the stream that murmurs idly at my feet, after meandering through a thousand meadows, finds a welcome in the bosom of the ocean at last."

I had scarcely uttered these words when my ear caught a rustling sound amongst the dead grass and fallen branches on the opposite side of the brook, and I saw the figure of an aged woman stooping down to fill a pitcher with water. The bank was so damp and slippery that it would have been difficult to find safe footing even for one more light and agile. After many fruitless attempts, she looked up, as if to see whether any one was near of whom she might ask assistance, and half ashamed of my tardy offer, I crossed the stream and stooped down myself for the water.

There was to me a strange novelty in doing even this act of common kindness, which pleased me for the moment, as it brought a change; and I insisted upon carrying the pitcher, if her home was not far distant.

"Oh! no," said she, with many apologies, "it is close by. Just at the skirt of the wood. You



may see the smoke beside that old tree. But still it is too far for you to carry such a weight, and the way is not the cleanest." Here she hesitated; for there was evidently some other reason why she did not wish me to go with her, and this exciting my curiosity, I persevered with my burden, which, had it been imposed upon me, and not of my own choosing, I should have thought intolerably heavy.

The cottage to which our path led, was beautifully situated, and at first I thought it presented a perfect picture of peace; so apt are we to imagine that the cares and troubles, and perplexities of life must necessarily be shut out from such picturesque and secluded retreats. On a nearer inspection, however, I found an air of great poverty spread over the whole, and a slovenly appearance about the door, that might soon have been done away by a strong and willing hand.

At the entrance of a little plot of garden, the old woman stopped and took the pitcher from my hands, with many hearty thanks for the service I had done her.

"May I not go in with you?" said I.

"Oh! yes ma'am, if you please," but she stopped again, and looked distressed. "I have a poor lassie," said she, (for they were north country people) "who is just now in some trouble, and will not be much pleased to see the face of a stranger, but I am sure you are a kind-hearted lady, and you may be able to say something that will comfort her."

We were standing but a few paces from the door, though screened from the small window, and while we hesitated about entering, I heard the following words sung in a sweet and plaintive voice by some one within, who appeared to be unconscious of a listener.

## SONG.

- “ Listen ! oh ! listen ! is Ronald returning ?  
Hear ye the sound of his step o’er the lea ?  
Come again, lost one, the bright fire is burning,  
The hearth is swept clean in thy cottage for thee.
- “ Sad is the night, and the morning how dreary ;  
Dark is the sun-rise when Ronald’s away :  
Come again lov’d one, my bosom is weary,  
Pining to welcome thee through the long day.
- “ Where is my joy if thy smile is not near me ?  
Where is my hope if thou wilt not return ?  
Vainly my bonny bairn’s lisping would cheer me,  
Vainly my mother’s bright ingle would burn.
- “ Where are the sunbeams that danced on the mountain ?  
Where is the moonlight that slept in the vale ?  
Where is the sparkling foam of the fountain ?  
The music that sigh’d in the whispering gale ?
- “ Where are the songs I have heard the birds singing,  
When all was melody tun’d to mine ear ?  
Now every note a sad burden is bringing,  
Warbling of spring-time, while winter is near.

“ Where, bonny babe, is thy wandering father ?  
Close thy sweet eye-lids, and hush thee to rest,  
Ask me no more, hapless thing, I would rather  
Lull thee to sleep on this comfortless breast.

“ Come again Ronald, the bright fire is burning,  
Thy wife and thy mother are watching for thee ;  
Come again lov'd one, thy joyful returning  
Brings beauty to nature, and gladness to me.”

“ Oh ! that's her way,” said the old woman.  
“ When she's left alone it lightens her poor heart to sing these dismal ditties, if she thinks no one can hear her. But come in, my good lady, you must not stand here in the cold.”

The sound of our steps at the door brought the young woman in an instant from the fire-side, where she had been sitting with her baby in her arms. There was at first a bright flash of expectation in her looks, which faded away on seeing who we were, and though she welcomed us in with civility and kindness, I saw her often turn away to wipe off the tears that were continually gathering in her eyes. At last she retired into an inner room, and I was left at liberty to ask her mother what what was the cause of her distress.

“ It's a long story,” said the old woman, “ and one that is too common for you to listen to ; but the shortest and the worst part of it is, that my poor Jenny has a drunken husband. He was a bonny Scotch lad when we first knew him, and even now

look so sick, and faint, that my heart aches to see her.

Oh! if we had no consolation beyond ourselves, I think we should both die before the end of another day! But we are not, I hope we are not, without some hold of better things. We pray diligently, and sometimes our prayers are blest to us, and we rise up, if not in the expectation that they will be answered in the way we wish, yet in perfect trust that we shall be wisely and mercifully dealt with, and that the very burden of which we are complaining, is exactly the trial we are most in need of. Sometimes we feel this in such a lively manner, that it almost grows into gladness; and we look on beyond this little spot of earth, this little speck of time, and are satisfied that we know not what is best for us, and then we speak to each other words of cheering, and read our Bible, and see how the Lord led his people through the wilderness.

Oh! my dear lady, miserable as we may appear to you, we would not exchange these seasons of blessed confidence for all that a wealthier or seemingly happier station could afford.

Perhaps you have never been brought to this. Perhaps you have been brought to it by an easier way. I have no right to ask questions of you, but there is something in your face which tells me that all is not sweetness of which you have to drink. Whatever your trials may be, I think they cannot well be greater than my poor daughter's. Remember,

when you go home, that there is consolation even for these; and, so saying, she bid me good day, for I had already risen to depart.

On returning home after this scene, I was much struck by a sense of my own deficiency in all that I had found here exemplified; in patient submission, in watchfulness, and confiding trust, in short, in the three Christian graces, faith, hope, and charity. And yet I had dared to think my portion hard. And so unquestionably it was to me; but I had chosen my own lot; I had taken up my own burden, I had filled my own cup with bitterness; and since, to my natural feelings that lot was most wretched, that burden most grievous to be borne, and that cup most unpalatable; there was urgent need for me to look beyond my present blighted and gloomy prospects, to that region of blessedness, where there is neither blight nor gloom.

“But what,” exclaimed I, giving way to my cheerless meditations, “what is there in this wide world for me! This poor woman doats upon her husband with all the enthusiasm of youth, and the very love which tortures her heart, at the same time keeps it from the stagnation of despair.”

In the midst of my gloomy reflections I was startled by the sound of carriage wheels at the door, and looking out, I saw my husband, extremely pale, dressed in a loose gown, and supported, or rather carried into the house by a medical gentleman who lived near us.



He had gone out that day with the intention of compelling a young horse to take a desperate leap, and the consequences were such as might have been anticipated. The beast was obstinate, the man furious; at last, after a dreadful conflict, both horse and rider had rolled together down a steep bank, and, had not a poor man been passing at the time, in all probability my husband would have been unable to extricate himself. He had paid dearly for his exploit by many severe contusions, but he had a good-natured way of making the best of that which was undeniably bad, and he now looked cheerful, and affected to be much less hurt than he really was.

There is nothing wins upon our kindness more than suffering patiently endured; and when my husband saw my real concern, and my willingness to serve and assist him, his joy and gratitude were beyond bounds.

"Be always thus," said he, "and you may make of me what you please."

"Be always ill," thought I, "and it will be no effort to me to do my duty."

It is peculiar to weak and flippant characters to imagine that every new impression they receive will be deep, and lasting, and influential upon their future conduct. The surface of their animal existence is so often and so easily stirred, that they have no time to ascertain what lies beneath, and thus are incapable of reasoning from analogy, of judging rationally of their own feelings or motives, and of drawing conclu-

sions from the force of established habit, the power of association, and the impossibility of acting rightly merely from occasional efforts of the natural will.

Any one who had but slightly studied human nature, would have thought my husband, during his confinement to a quiet chamber, in a state of mind which promised great amendment of life. Even I was fain to build upon the earnestness of his promises, made in the warmth of awakened feeling; and thus the moments we spent together whilst he was ill and helpless, were amongst the happiest of my life; for I had then an object in view towards the attainment of which I seemed to be making some progress. Nor was it an unpleasing task, to reason with one who now was glad to listen; to plead with one who heard me in a subdued and gentle spirit. But my hour of trial was not yet come, and often after this I was compelled to return to the cottage of the poor woman, to take a fresh lesson for my own private walk, to gather fresh strength for the performance of my own duties.

It was with deep and heartfelt regret I observed in my repeated visits, that disease was making rapid progress in the once healthy frame of the young woman. The kind of melancholy which I endured, and which I fancied so intolerable, made no inroads upon my constitution; but hers was a torture of the heart, a strife between love and sorrow, which no human constitution can long sustain.

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yet found the wandering husband at home; until one evening, when nature was again assuming the freshness of spring, I was surprised to see the figure of a man seated beside the poor invalid. At first I hesitated, but Jenny's voice called me in with such a gladsome tone, that I could not turn away without for once witnessing her joy.

"He is here!" she whispered to me as I stood beside her. "He is here!" she repeated, with a look of happiness that I never can forget.

Ronald was indeed a fine looking man, whose strongly marked countenance indicated a strong character. At first I thought him handsome; but when he spoke there was a thirsty kind of irregularity about his features, which had no doubt been brought on by his dreadfully debasing habits. Jenny, however, seemed to be unconscious that he exhibited any other aspect than that of perfect beauty; for she leaned with her thin white hand upon his arm, and looked up into his face, as if she read there all that was written in her book of life.

This little act of kindness on his part (his merely staying with her one evening when her mother was absent,) was worth, in her estimation, all that the world could offer of riches, rank, or splendour; and her gentle eyes were lighted up with something of the brilliancy they had worn in former days, and her hollow cheek was tinged with a feverish hue of crimson beauty. Oh! how different from the rich glow that had once distinguished her as the pride of village maidens!



It was with difficulty I persuaded Ronald to keep his place at the fire, when I sat down beside them. He would gladly have gone away, like one who feels that much charity is needed to tolerate his presence; but Jenny and I both did our best to detain him, and when she asked me to read to them a chapter in the Bible, saying she was sure that Ronald would like to hear me read, he felt compelled in common civility to remain.

Half afraid of venturing too far in the presence of one with whose character I was in a great measure unacquainted, I chose the parable of the Prodigal Son, and my heart melted as I went through those touching passages which describe the return of the penitent.

On looking up, I saw that Jenny had covered her face with her handkerchief, while with the other hand trembling like an aspen leaf, she still grasped the arm of her husband, who bent down his head over a rosy child, seated on his knee, and stroked its glossy ringlets, tied and untied the strings of its frock, and pressed its cheek to his breast, as if glad to do any thing that might relieve him from the misery of sitting quietly beneath the scrutiny of searching eyes.

"Is there any thing," thought I, "that a stranger's voice may say to add weight to that of conscience?" and I offered up an inward prayer that my humble endeavours might not be made in vain. I know not how it was, but I found strength and power on that occasion to utter words that sounded daring to a

strong man, and a stranger ; but he bore them well : and when I took my leave, even offered to attend me home, as darkness was fast coming on. I accepted his offer, and we talked by the way of the hope there was in store for the penitent ; of the efficacy of prayer ; and of the mercy that fails not even in the latest hour. And then, last of all, we talked about poor Jenny ; and though I could not say (for I did not believe) that even his altered life would now save her, yet I urged upon him many times before we separated, the satisfaction he would afterwards feel in having cheered her last moments, and watched her gentle spirit depart in peace.

It was wonderful to me, that, after the exertions I had been able to make with those whose feelings and habits were comparatively strange to me, I should find any difficulty in performing the same duties at home : but so it was. Ronald was a man of strong and deep character, with whom the words that fell unanswered upon his ear, were often graven on his heart ; nor was it from carelessness about the ruin which his habits brought upon his family, that he had so long persisted in the evil of his ways. So far from this, the very anguish of his self-upbraidings sometimes drove him away from home, and in this manner his desperation served to increase its own violence.

The case with my husband was essentially different. His was a mere animal propensity—over which a variable and volatile spirit had little power. It was not to drown the anguish of a tortured

mind that he swallowed the fatal draught, but solely for the sake of the excitement and the love of what he called "good company." In his often-repeated fits of penitence there was no want of sincerity for the time; but nothing could give constancy and firmness to his resolutions. Thus, on recovering from the long confinement to which his accident had subjected him, he rushed again into the world with fresh interest, and sat down to the jovial board, determined to drink *but little*!

Still there was a radical change in my feelings towards him, and the views which I entertained of his character no longer plunged me into moodiness and despair. During his illness I had reaped the blessed fruits of continued exertion for another's good; and though I could not be said to love him beyond the common kindness we feel for those who share our lot in life, I had learned to look charitably even upon him. When I endeavoured calmly to weigh and estimate his character, thousands of instances occurred to my recollection in which I might have acted a more Christian part towards him, and with these considerations came fresh pity and forgiveness for his faults.

"But what?" said I, one day, to Mr. Ormorand, when we had been speaking with kindness and commiseration of the absent — "What can I do to save him?"

"My dear friend," replied Mr. Ormorand, "you must do your best: I never heard that we were com-

manded to save each other. Happy is it for us that the salvation of our own souls is all that is strictly required of us. But remember that, in order to make sure of this great object, it is necessary that we watch over each other for good ; that we do not ‘ darken counsel ’ by calculating too much upon the end, but persevere faithfully and diligently in rendering our appointed service. Your endeavours to save your husband from disgrace and ruin may not be attended with the reward you desire ; but are there not other rewards in the hand of Omnipotence, far, far beyond what your most earnest endeavours can deserve ? Is there not ‘ that peace of mind which passeth all understanding ’ never denied to the humble and persevering suppliant ? Are there not the promises of the gospel to support the pilgrim on his way ? Is there not the unbounded ocean of everlasting mercy, into which the tears of our weak nature may flow ? Oh ! do not despair, even though the desire of your eyes should be denied ! You know that in this world is not our rest, and that none can drink of the cup of life without tasting its unpalatable dregs. Yours may be all centred in one drop of inexpressible bitterness ! But is not the rest more sweet than falls to the lot of many ? I know what you will answer me : you will say, ‘ let the axe fall anywhere but here. Let my outward portion be one of poverty and suffering, but leave me a home where my spirit may dwell in peace. Let the blight come in the tempest, so that my fireside com-

forts remain unscathed. Let the lightning strike my bark upon the ocean, so that it spare my summer bower !' And I who know the strength of these feelings, not from their anguish, but their blessedness, preach to you, it may seem, in mockery of that which I have never experienced, but still with a heart that bleeds for your calamity ; and still with boldness ; for I know that the events of this transitory life are not as they appear to our contracted vision ; that there is the working of a mighty and mysterious Power around and above us, striking out waters from the barren rock, upon which we have lain prostrate in our despair ; bringing forth flowers and fruits in the wilderness, where we have stretched our wearied limbs to die ; and raising up joy and beauty from the ashes of our ruined hopes !

“ Let us look, my friend, away from this one point of misery, and number the blessings that are beyond. Have you not the means of assisting and cherishing the poor ? Employ yourself diligently in the service of others, and your home — at least your heart — will no longer be desolate. Not administering outward comforts merely, but conveying instruction to the ignorant ; and thus, while bearing a blessing to the needy, you will often be blest yourself.

“ I recommend these pursuits especially to you, because I believe them to be amongst the means afforded by Divine Providence for beguiling the mind



from melancholy and fruitless brooding over its own secret and selfish sorrows. Beyond these are those spiritual helps, which I need not point out to you, but which I pray fervently may prove the unfailing support of your soul."

It was not long after this conversation took place that I was summoned to attend the last moments of poor Jenny; and here, if I had doubted the efficacy of that faith, which my worthy friend had so earnestly recommended to me, I should have seen a lively and striking instance of its power to support the feeble spirit.

The exhausted sufferer was still able to speak; and, as if aware that time with her was short, she laid her hand upon my arm, as I stood beside her, and looking imploringly in my face, entreated me, in the simple language of her heart, to put my trust solely and entirely in Him, who knows what is best for his frail creatures; "for," continued she, in a cheerful and animated tone, "it is this that has supported me; it is this that will support you."

The aged mother sat by the bed, with more of peace in her countenance than I had seen there before; and Ronald, poor Ronald! now smitten to his inmost soul, covered his face with both his hands, and sobbed aloud, in the bitterness of unspeakable anguish; sometimes, as he was able to raise up his head, catching Jenny's eye turned towards him with such looks of tenderness and love, that the fountains

of his tears burst forth again, and he wept like a child, without concealment or shame.

“ Oh ! may those tears be blessed ! ” said the dying woman. “ Think not of me, Ronald, when I am gone. I was but like a flower in your path, love, that withered at noon-day. But think of the flowers of paradise, and the burden that must be borne, and the battle that must be fought, before we can enter where they bloom for ever. Keep on, keep on, the strife will soon be over ; it is worth all to gain the prize ! ” and, so saying, her gentle soul departed.

From this time Ronald was an altered man ; not but that he had sometimes hard conflicts before he could compel himself patiently to endure the gnawing worm of self-reproach ; but what with the vigilant care of a Christian mother, and the winning helplessness of his poor children, and, above all, with that mercy, whose unfailing fountains refresh the soul of the penitent, he was enabled to keep on a steady course, without any after breach of regularity of life or conduct.

Not so, my poor husband. I have now watched over him for years. I have seen him dismissed from his high station, and returned thanks that he was no longer permitted to disgrace the ministry of the church. I have descended with him into the most private and secluded walk of life ; and though I have found in that walk much to reconcile its roughness, and smooth down its thorns, I still lift up my voice

from a weary and wounded spirit, (and Oh ! that I could speak more powerfully) to warn the trifling, the thoughtless, and the rash, from that most lamentable of all calamities—most irreparable of all misfortunes—“an ill-assorted marriage.”





